



LIPPINCOTT'S  
CLASSICS



BURNS'S  
LIFE AND POEMS  
BY  
EDWIN L. MILLER, A.M.

THE SERIES EDITED BY  
EDWIN L. MILLER



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LIPPINCOTT'S CLASSICS—VOL. XIV.

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PRINCIPAL OF THE NORTHERN HIGH SCHOOL, DETROIT, MICH.

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BURNS'S POEMS



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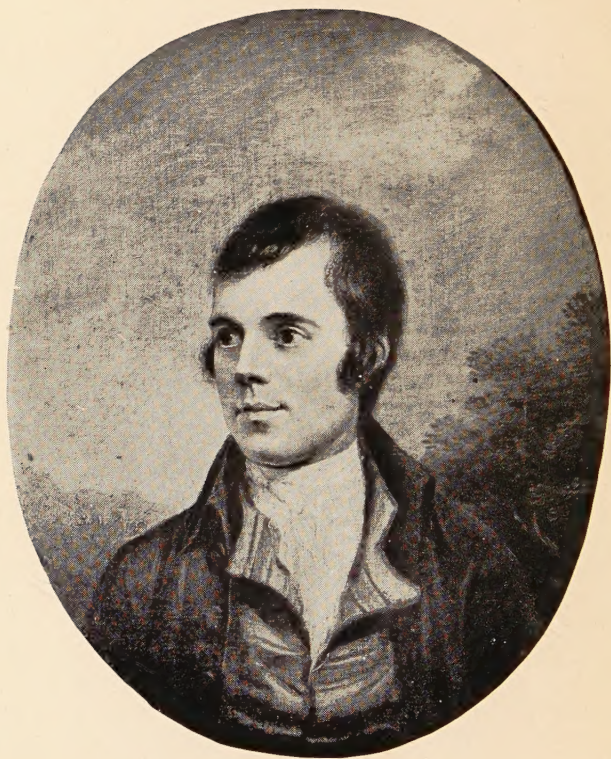
## BURNS'S POEMS

With Notes By E. L. MILLER

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ROBERT BURNS.

From the Portrait by Nasmyth in the National Gallery of Scotland at  
Edinburgh.



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PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

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## PREFACE

Thomas Carlyle in his Essay on Burns says: "These Poems are but like little rhymed fragments in the great unrhymed Romance of his earthly existence; and it is only when intercalated in this at their proper places that they attain their full measure of significance." Upon the principle suggested in this sentence the following account of Burns's life and poetry has been built. I hope that it may stimulate a wider interest in a man who sang of love, manhood, freedom, and brotherhood in a fashion not surpassed in any age and which the world needs today perhaps as much as in any period. At this time I wish to say that this volume could not have been written, as it has been, in the midst of many other duties, without the aid of my wife, to whose industry and understanding most of its merit, if it has any, is due.

EDWIN L. MILLER

DETROIT, MICHIGAN.  
June 18, 1922.



# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

ROBERT BURNS

1759-1796

"In my early life," says Charles Lamb, "I had a passionate fondness for the poetry of Burns. I have sometimes foolishly hoped to ingratiate myself with his countrymen by expressing it. But I have always found that a true Scot resents your admiration of his compatriot even more than he would your contempt of him." This passage occurs in Lamb's "Essay on Imperfect Sympathies" and is doubtless true, as far as Lamb was concerned, because he says so. Probably any other Englishman would have had the same experience. An American, on the other hand, can always win a Scot's good will by praising Burns. Whether this difference is due to that natural distrust which springs from propinquity or to some other cause does not matter; the important point is that Burns is so near and dear to his countrymen that they will not submit to have him even so much as praised by a nation whose sympathy with them they feel to be imperfect. To them he is not the idealized bard, with his high fancies and garlands and singing robes about him, but rather plain Bobbie Burns, the Ayrshire ploughboy. It is perhaps impossible for one not of Scottish blood to realize what a world of affection there is in the uncontentious familiarity of that phrase. Burns's admirers, however, are not by any means all of Scottish blood. If figures do not lie, he is closer to the hearts of more people than Shakespeare himself. Twenty thousand persons annually make the pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon, but the number who go each year to Ayr exceeds this by ten thousand. Popular as Burns is among the common people, among the cultured he is, if



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

that be possible, more popular still. Philosophers and critics vie in doing him honor. Spenser is not more truly the "poets' poet" than he; indeed, it may be said with perfect truth that no bard has been so splendidly or so lovingly commemorated by his brother bards. Byron placed him in the front rank of singers. Wordsworth said:

"He showed my youth  
How verse may build a princely throne  
On humble truth."

Roscoe declared that he was the sweetest bard that ever breathed the soothing strain. Halleck wrote of him:

"His is that language of the heart,  
In which the answering heart would speak,  
Thought, word, that bid the warm tear start,  
Or the smile light the cheek;

"And his that music to whose tone  
The common pulse of man keeps time,  
In cot or castle's mirth or moan,  
In cold or sunny clime."

"Who," asked Whittier, himself a sort of American Burns in more ways than one,

"Who his human heart has laid  
To nature's bosom nearer?  
Who sweetened toil like him, or paid  
To love a tribute dearer?"

"Through all his tuneful art, how strong  
The human feeling gushes!  
The very moonlight of his song  
Is warm with smiles and blushes!"

But the finest tribute of all is from the gentle and loving pen of Longfellow. It sketches Burns's life in its main aspects so precisely and describes the strength and the weakness of his character with such insight that it must be given here in full:

"I see, amid the fields of Ayr,\*  
A ploughman who, in foul and fair,  
Sings at his task

---

\*The author thanks the Houghton Mifflin Company for permission to reprint this poem.

## ROBERT BURNS

So clear, we know not if it is  
The laverock's song we hear, or his,  
Nor care to ask.

“For him, the ploughing of those fields  
A more ethereal harvest yields  
Than sheaves of grain:  
Songs flush with purple bloom the rye;  
The plover's call, the curlew's cry  
Sing in his brain.

“Touched by his hand, the wayside weed  
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed  
Beside the stream  
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass  
And heather, where his footsteps pass,  
The brighter seem.

“He sings of love, whose flame illumines  
The darkness of low cottage rooms;  
He feels the force,  
The treacherous undertow, and stress  
Of wayward passions, and no less  
The keen remorse.

“At moments, wrestling with his fate,  
His voice is harsh, but not with hate;  
The brushwood, hung  
Above the tavern door, lets fall  
Its bitter leaf, its drop of gall—,  
Upon his tongue.

“But still the music of his song  
Rises o'er all, elate and strong;  
Its master chords  
Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood,  
Its discords but an interlude  
Between the words.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

“And then to die so young, and leave  
Unfinished what he might achieve!  
Yet better sure  
Is this, than wandering up and down,  
An old man in a country town,  
Infirm and poor.

“For now he haunts his native land  
As an immortal youth; his hand  
Guides every plough;  
He sits beside each ingle nook;  
His voice is in each rushing brook,  
Each rustling bough.

“His presence haunts this room to-night,  
A form of mingled mist and light  
From that far coast.  
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!  
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,  
Dear guest and ghost!”

It is always worth while to take the trouble necessary to understand why the writings of a man have influenced other men so profoundly. To do this it is essential, as a rule, that the poet's life and environment be taken into account as well as his compositions. This to an extraordinary degree is the case with Burns. Taken together, his life and his writings form a unit, a story full of human interest, of humour, and of tragic pathos. Considered apart from his life, his poems, beautiful and passionate as they are, can never be fully understood. We proceed therefore at once to a consideration of his biography as far as it illuminates his verse and of his verse in so much as it throws light upon his stormy life.

November 11, William Burness, the poet's father, was born in Kincardineshire. His father, it seems, had been

## ROBERT BURNS

"out" in the Stuart rebellion of 1715, and he himself probably took a hand in that of 1745. At any rate he was compelled to flee from Kincardineshire, and finally settled at Alloway as a market gardener with a farm of seven acres. He must not be regarded, however, in any sense as a peasant. Stubborn ungainly integrity and headlong ungovernable irascibility hindered his advancement. His gifted son, after his death, wrote this inscription for his tombstone, which is still standing in Alloway kirkyard:

"O ye, whose cheek the tear of pity stains,  
Draw near, with pious reverence and attend!  
Here lie the husband's dear remains,  
The tender father and the generous friend:  
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;  
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;  
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe,  
For e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side!"

1732

March 17, Agnes Brown, the poet's mother, was born in Carrick, Ayrshire. She is said to have had a quick wit and a great fund of stories.

1757

December 15, William Burness and Agnes Brown were married.

1759

January 25, Robert Burness was born at Alloway, two miles south of Ayr, in a clay built hut, the work of his father's own hands. A week after the poet's birth, a storm blew a portion of the wall of this building in upon him and his mother as they lay in bed and they were carried at midnight to a neighbor's. The poet has recorded these early days of his in spirited verse:

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

## SONG

### RANTIN, ROVIN ROBIN

TUNE—"Daintie Davie."

There was a lad was born in Kyle,<sup>1</sup>  
But whatna day o' whatna style,<sup>2</sup>  
I doubt it's hardly worth the while  
To be sae nice wi' Robin.

#### CHORUS

Robin was a rovin boy,  
Rantin, rovin, rantin, rovin.  
Robin was a rovin boy,  
Rantin, rovin Robin.

Our monarch's hindmost year but ane  
Was five and twenty days begun;<sup>3</sup>  
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar win'  
Blew *hansel* in on Robin.

[ = a first gift]

The gossip *keekit* in his *loof*; [ = looked; = palm]  
*Quo' scho*, "Wha lives will see the proof; [ = quoth she]  
This *waly* boy will be nae *coof*; [ = fine; = fool]  
I think we'll ca' him Robin.

He'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',  
But aye a heart *aboon* then a' [ = above]  
He'll be a credit *till* us a'; [ = to]  
We'll a' be proud o' Robin.

But sure as three times three make nine,  
I see by *ilka* score and line [ = every]  
This chap will dearly like our kin,<sup>4</sup>  
So leeze<sup>5</sup> me on thee! Robin."

1. Kyle = the central district of Ayrshire, bounded on the south by the Doon and on the north by the Irvine.

2. Style = but what day of what style. The calendar had been corrected early in the eighteenth century, but the old style was still used in remote country districts, as it was in Russia up to 1914.

3. George II died 1760; Burns was born Jan. 25, 1759

4. Our *kin* = our kind = our sex.

5. *Leeze me on thee* = Allow me to express my admiration for thee. *Leeze* = *lief* = German *lieb* = dear. Literally "leeze me" therefore means "dear to me."



## RANTIN, ROVIN ROBIN

Burns himself was fond of saying that it was no wonder that one ushered into the world amid such a tempest should be the victim of stormy passions.

The house has proved more permanent than the rude experience of the infant poet would seem to augur; it is still in a state of perfect preservation and is probably as well worth visiting as any single object in Scotland. It has been converted into a Burns museum and is protected with scrupulous veneration. The feelings of the poetical pilgrim who stands within its walls have been described with a sympathy that approaches genius in the following lines, sent by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll to a newspaper published at Ayr:

“Though Scotland boasts a thousand names  
Of patriot, king, and peer,  
The grandest, noblest of them all  
Was loved and cradled here.

“‘Tis but a hut roofed o’er with straw,  
A cottage made of clay;  
One door shuts out the wind and storm;  
One window greets the day.

\* \* \*

“And yet I stand within this hut,  
And hold all thrones in scorn,  
For here, within this humble room,  
Love’s sweetest bard was born.

\* \* \*

“And here the world, through all the years,  
As long as day returns,  
The tribute of its love and tears  
Shall pay to Robert Burns.”

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

### 1765 (Six)

To the blood of the Burnesses, it has been said, a love of knowledge was native, as valor was native in the old times to the Douglasses. William Burness accordingly determined, even in the absence of a school at Alloway, that his boys should not grow up in ignorance. Four neighbors of kindred tastes agreed to share with him the expense of hiring a teacher, and William Murdoch, a young man of fine ability, was engaged. He was boarded alternately at the homes of his patrons, and to him Robert and his brother Gilbert were now sent to school. Under him they learned reading, spelling, and writing; were drilled in English grammar; and were taught to turn verse into prose, to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical ones, and to supply ellipses. Of the two boys, Murdoch says Gilbert was the wittier and more imaginative. Robert was stubborn, moody, and taciturn. They could not learn music. Robert's voice especially was untuneable and his ear so dull that he could hardly distinguish one air from another.

### 1766 (Seven)

The Burness family removed to the farm of Mt. Oliphant, three miles away.

### 1768 (Nine)

Murdoch gave up Alloway School. Before his departure he took to the Burness family as a present Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. Robert, however, was so much shocked by the scenes of horror in which the play abounds, that he told Mr. Murdoch he would burn the book if it were left. "The earliest compositions," he said himself, "in which I took any pleasure, were the *Vision of Mirza* and a hymn of Addison's beginning: 'How are thy servants blest, O Lord.' I particularly remember one half stanza which was music to my boyish ear:

'For though in dreadful whirls we hung  
High on the broken wave!'

## ROBERT BURNS

### 1770 (Eleven)

William Burness was now the boys' sole instructor. He taught them arithmetic. The books at their disposal were Salmon's *Geographical Grammar*, Denham's *Physics* and *Astro-Theology*, Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, the Bible, a collection of prose and verse, an English grammar, a volume of English history (the reigns of James I and Charles I), the life of William Wallace, and a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign. The last inspired Robert with a great desire to excel as a letter-writer.

### 1772 (Thirteen)

In order to improve the penmanship of his sons, William Burness sent them week about, during the summer quarter, to the parish school at Dalrymple, two or three miles distant. Murdoch, who had been appointed teacher of English at Ayr school, sent Pope's works to them.

### 1773 (Fourteen)

Robert boarded three weeks with Murdoch at Ayr, in order to review English grammar. He also learned a little French, and when he returned home he had a French Grammar, a French Dictionary, and Fenelon's *Télèmaque*. He started Latin, but learned only enough to enable him to misquote occasional phrases.

### 1774 (Fifteen)

Burns's knowledge of French gained him several good friends among the upper class in Ayr. A lady lent him Pope's *Homer* and the *Spectator*. From the latter he learned much concerning etiquette. Love and poetry began with him simultaneously. He tells the story himself: "You know our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labours of the harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scottish idiom: she was a

'bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass.' In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion which I hold to be the first of human joys. I did not know myself why I liked to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart strings thrill like an Aeolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities she sung sweetly and it was her favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he." The attempt, accordingly, was made, with the following result:

SONG—HANDSOME NELL.

TUNE—"I am a man unmarried."

O, once I loved a bonie<sup>1</sup> lass,  
 Ay, and I love her still;  
 And whilst that virtue warms my breast  
 I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonie lasses I hae seen,  
 And *mony* full as *braw* [=many; =handsome]  
 But for a modest gracefu' mien  
 The like I never saw.

A bonie lass, I will confess,  
 Is pleasant to the *e'e*; [=eye]  
 But, without some better qualities,  
 She's no a lass for me.

---

1. Bonie—"There is a good old word whose dictionary meaning is 'Home-like beauty—sweet and fair' Bonny—she was exactly that." Grace Sartwell Mason. *The Shining Moment*. Saturday Evening Post, Jan. 17, 1920, P. 57.

## HANDSOME NELL

But Nelly's looks are blithe and sweet,  
 And what is best of *a'*, [ = all]  
 Her reputation is complete,  
 And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye *sae* clean and neat, [ = so]  
*Baith* decent and genteel; [ = both]  
 And then there's something in her gait  
*Gars ony* dress look weel. [ = makes; = any]

A gaudy dress and gentle air  
 May lightly touch the heart;  
 But it's innocence and modesty  
 That polishes the dart.<sup>2</sup>

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me;  
 'Tis this enchants my soul;  
 For absolutely in my breast  
 She reigns without control.

Many years later Burns wrote: "I composed it in a d enthusiasm of passion and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies, at the remembrance."

### 1775 (Sixteen)

Robert was already the chief laborer on the farm. At plough, scythe, or reap-hook he feared no competitor. His father, however, had become involved in debt. The farm was unproductive. Robert was overworked and overtaxed. Almost every night he had a dull headache. For several years butcher's meat was unknown in their house. The two extremes of his ploughboy carcass, Burns himself tells us, were often exposed to all the inconveniences of all the seasons. To add to their distress, a cannical factor often set the family in tears. The hard

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2. "Here is one verse which, for directness of feeling and felicity of language, he hardly ever surpassed." Shairp



## 1776 (Seventeen)

labor, poor living, and sorrow of this time soon showed their effect in the stoop of Robert's shoulders, in nervous disorders about his heart, and in frequent fits of despondency.

Robert spent the summer at Kirkoswald in learning mensuration and surveying. Incidentally he fell in love again. He also spent some of his time in the dissipated society of smugglers. At Kirkoswald he read Thomson and Shenstone; he also procured about this time some plays of Shakespeare, Allan Ramsay's poems, and a collection of English songs. This last work was, he said, his *vade mecum*; "I pored over it driving my cart or walking to labor and carefully noted the true, tender, or sublime from affectation or fustian." On his return home, he attended a dancing school to give his manners a "brush," although this was contrary to his father's express command.

## 1777 (Eighteen)

William Burness and his family removed to Lochlea (pronounced Lochly), a farm of 110 acres in the parish of Tarbolton. Robert and Gilbert were now allowed seven pounds each a year as wages. Robert tells the story of their fortunes at Lochlea as follows: "For four years we lived comfortably here; but, a difference commencing between him (W. B.) and his landlord as to terms, after three years tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my father was just saved from the horrors of a gaol, by a consumption."

At Tarbolton Burns's admiration for the fair sex began to grow. In fact, he was almost constantly in love and in trouble because of it; one of his biographers has said finely: "In almost all the foul weather that Burns encountered, a woman may be discovered, fleeting through it like a stormy petrel." There was not a comely lass in the parish about whom he did not compose one song at least, and then he made one which included them all. He also won a reputation as a discreet confidant, which resulted in his being in the secret of half the loves in Tarbolton.

## ROBERT BURNS

### 1780 (Twenty-one)

The Bachelors' Club was established at Tarbolton by Robert and Gilbert Burns and five other young men. At the meetings, which were held once a month, the sum expended by each member was not to exceed threepence. One of the objects of the club was to furnish practice in debating; among the questions discussed were the following:

Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friendship?

Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each other's friendship, there should be any reserve?

Whether is the savage man, or the peasant of a civilized country, in the most happy situation?

Whether is a young man of the lower ranks of life likeliest to be happy who has a good education and a well informed mind, or he who has just the education of those around him?

Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behavior, but without any fortune; which of them shall he choose?

### 1781 (Twenty-two)

David Sillar was admitted to the Bachelors' Club. He describes Burns: "He wore the only tied hair in the parish and in the church his plaid, which was of a particular color, I think fillemot, he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. Between sermons we often took a walk in the fields; in these walks I have frequently been struck by his facility in addressing the fair sex, and it was generally a death blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Some book he always carried and read when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table." Burns had now added to his collection McPherson's *Ossian*, Sterne's works, and Mackenzie's *Man of the World and Man of Feeling*. The last he prized, he said, next to the Bible. Among the fair ones whom he courted at this period was a superior young woman, who bore the unpoetical name of Ellison Begbie. To her he is thought to have addressed this song:

### MARY MORISON.

OH, Mary, at thy window be;  
It is the wished, the trysted hour!  
Those smiles and glances let me see,  
That make the miser's treasure poor:  
How blithely wad I bide the stoure,<sup>1</sup>  
A weary slave frae sun to sun,  
Could I the rich reward secure,  
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string  
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',  
To thee my fancy took its wing;  
I sat, but neither heard nor saw.  
Though this was fair, and that was braw,  
And yon the toast of a' the town,  
I sighed, and said amang them a':  
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

Oh, Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,  
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?  
Or canst thou break that heart of his,  
Whase only faut is loving thee?  
If love for love thou wilt na gie,  
At least be pity to me shown;  
A thought ungentle canna be  
The thought o' Mary Morison.

---

1. Bide the stoure = endure any hardship.

## MARY MORISON

### 1782 (Twenty-three)

Ellison refused the poet's offer of marriage. Lochlea hereafter was distasteful and he went to Irvine, where he entered into partnership with a flax-dresser, his design being to learn the trade and form a connection that would assist in disposing of the product of the farm at Lochlea. The venture ended in disaster. Burns's partner proved a scoundrel; and, to cap the climax, the shop, on New Year's day, took fire and was burned to ashes, leaving Burns, as he said himself, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.

At Irvine, Burns became a free mason and associated with young men of a more liberal manner of thinking and living than he had been used to. At Irvine, too, he read his first novels, *Pamela* and *Ferdinand*, *Count Fathom*, and met with Fergusson's *Scottish Poems*. The latter book produced a profound effect on his mind; indeed, it identified his poetical ambition, which had begun to evaporate, and determined to a great extent the quality of his future work.

### 1783 (Twenty-four)

After his disastrous experiences at Irvine, Burns returned to farm life at Lochlea. He now began to cultivate the Muse with an enthusiasm and a success which he had not shown before. He was fond of animals, and among his other pets was a sheep named Mailie. He kept her gathered with her two lambs in a field near the house. One day, as he and his brothers were starting for their work with a team, a neighbor's boy named Hugh Wilson came running with the news that Mailie had entangled herself in her tether and was lying helpless in a ditch. Hugh was a curious-looking, awkward lad, about three-fourths as wise as other people, and his appearance and anxiety on this occasion greatly tickled Robert. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and, when the brothers returned from the plough in the evening, Robert repeated to Robert the following poem:

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

### THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE:

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

[ =yew]

[ = uncommonly]

As Mailie, and her lambs thegither,  
Was ae day nibbling on the tether,<sup>1</sup>  
Upon her *cloot* she *coost* a hitch,<sup>2</sup> [ = hoof; = cast]  
And owre she warsled in the ditch:<sup>3</sup>  
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,  
When Hughoc he cam *doytin'* by. [ = loafing]  
Wi' glow'rin' *een* and lifted han's, [ = eyes]  
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;  
He saw her days were near-hand ended,  
But, waes my heart!<sup>4</sup> he couldna mend it.  
He gaped wide, but naething spak—  
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

“O thou, whose lamentable<sup>5</sup> face  
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!  
My dying words attentive hear,  
And bear them to my master dear.

“Tell him, if e'er again he keep  
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,<sup>6</sup>  
Oh, bid him never tie them mair  
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!  
But ca' <sup>7</sup> them out to park or hill,  
And let them wander at their will;  
So may his flock increase, and grow  
To scores o' lambs, and packs o' *woo*! [ = wool]

- 
1. Nibbling on the tether = nibbling while tied.
  2. Coost a hitch = cast a hitch = entangled her foot.
  3. Warsled = wrestled = fell.
  4. Waes = woe is.
  5. Lamentable = a picture word. Do you see it?
  6. Muckle = much; gear = money.
  7. Ca' = call or drive.



## POOR MAILIE

“Tell him he was a master kin’,  
And aye <sup>8</sup> was guid to me and mine;  
And now my dying charge I gie him—  
My helpless lambs, I trust them wi’ him.

“Oh, bid him save their harmless lives  
Frae dogs, and *tods*, and butchers’ knives! [= foxes]  
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,  
Till they be fit to fend <sup>9</sup> themsel;  
And tent <sup>10</sup> them duly, e’en and morn,  
Wi’ teats <sup>11</sup> o’ hay, and ripps <sup>12</sup> o’ corn.

“And may they never learn the gaets<sup>13</sup>  
Of other vile, wanrestfu’ <sup>14</sup> pets;  
To slink through slaps,<sup>15</sup> and reave <sup>16</sup> and steal  
At stacks o’ peas, or stocks o’ kail. <sup>17</sup>  
So may they, like their great forbears, <sup>18</sup>  
For monie a year come through the shears:  
So wives <sup>19</sup> will gie them bits o’ bread,  
And bairns *greet* for them when they’re dead. [= cry]

“My poor toop-lamb, <sup>20</sup> my son and heir,  
Oh, bid him breed him up wi’ care;  
And if he live to be a beast,

- 
8. Aye = always; ay = yes.  
9. Fend = defend.  
10. Tent = protect, care for, tend.  
11. Teats = tastes, small quantities.  
12. Ripps = handfuls.  
13. Gaets = gaits or ways.  
14. Wanrestfu = unrestful; wan = un or not.  
15. Slaps = opening in walls or hedges.  
16. Reave = plunder, rob.  
17. Kail = colewort, cabbage.  
18. Forbears = ancestors.  
19. Wives = women. Cf. German *weib*.  
20. Toop-lamb = boy-lamb, ram, young ram.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

To pit some havins in his breast! <sup>21</sup>  
And warn him, what I winna name,  
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;  
And no to rin and wear his cloots,  
Like ither menseless, <sup>22</sup> graceless brutes.

“And neist my yowie, silly thing,  
Gude keep thee frae a tether string;  
Oh, may thou ne'er forgather up  
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop,  
But aye keep mind to moop and mell <sup>23</sup>  
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel.

“And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath  
I lea'e my blessin' wi' you baith:  
And when you think upo' your mither,  
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.” <sup>24</sup>

“Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail  
To tell my master a' my tale;  
And bid him burn his cursed tether,  
And, for thy pains, thou's get my blether.” <sup>25</sup>

This said, poor Mailie turned her head,  
And closed her een amang the dead.

It is pleasant to know that, as a matter of fact, Mailie did not perish in the tragic manner told by the bard, but lived to a good old age. When she did die, her master recorded her virtues in the following pathetic elegy:

---

21. Havins = behavings.

22. Menseless = manner-less.

23. Moop and mell = nibble and associate.

24. “A sermon in two lines for every family in the world.”  
*Andrew Carnegie.*

25. Blether = bladder—for a balloon, perhaps.

## POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY

### POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

LAMENT in rhyme, lament in prose,  
Wi' *saut* tears trickling down your nose;      [= salt]  
Our bardie's fate is at a close,  
    Past a' remead;  
The last sad cape-stane <sup>1</sup> of his woes —  
    Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,<sup>2</sup>  
That could sae bitter draw the tear,  
Or mak our bardie, *dowie*, wear      [= sad]  
    The mourning *weed*:      [= garment]  
He's lost a friend and neebor dear,  
    In Mailie dead.

Through a' the toun she trotted by him;  
A lang half-mile she could descry him;  
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,  
    She ran wi' speed:  
A friend mair faithful ne'er cam nigh him  
    Than Mailie dead.

I wat <sup>3</sup> she was a sheep o' sense,  
And could behave hersel wi' mense:<sup>4</sup>  
I'll say't she never brak a fence,  
    Through thievish greed.  
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the *spence*      [= parlor]  
    Sin' Mailie's dead.

---

1. Cap-stane = cope-stone = top-stone. Cf. Latin *caput* = head  
and English "cap."

2. Warl's gear = world's goods.

3. Wat = know.

4. Mense = manners or propriety.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Or, if he wanders up the *howe*, [ = hollow or dell]  
Her living image in her yowe  
Comes bleating to him, owre the *knowe*, [ = knoll or  
For bits o' bread; hillock]  
And down the briny pearls *rowe* [ = roll]  
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get <sup>5</sup> o' moorland tips,<sup>6</sup>  
Wi' tawted ket,<sup>7</sup> and hairy hips,  
For her forbears were brought in ships  
Frae yont the Tweed:<sup>8</sup>  
A bonnier *fleesh* ne'er crossed the clips [ = fleece]  
Than Mailie dead.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape  
That vile, wanchancie<sup>9</sup> thing—a *rape*! [ = rope]  
It makes guid fellows *girn* and gape, [ = grin]  
Wi' chokin' dread;  
And Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,  
For Mailie dead.

O a' ye bards on bonny Doon!  
And wha on Ayr your chanter's tune!  
Come, join the melancholious croon  
O' Robin's reed!  
His heart will never get aboon<sup>10</sup>—  
His Mailie's dead!

The measure of the Elegy is the first tangible evidence of the effect which Fergusson had produced on Burns.

To 1783 belong also two noteworthy songs:

- 
5. Get = offspring.
  6. Tips = rams.
  7. Tawted ket = matted fleece.
  8. From beyond the River Tweed; that is, from England.
  9. Wanchancie = un-lucky.
  10. Get aboon = recover.

## GREEN GROW THE RASHES

### SONG.

Tune—"My Nanie, O."

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,  
'Mang moors and mosses many, O,  
The wintry sun the day has closed  
And I'll awa' to Nanie, O.

\* \* \* \* \*

Her face is fair, her heart is true,  
As spotless as she's bonie, O;  
The op'n'ing *gowan*, *wat* wi' dew [ = daisy; = wet]  
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

## SONG—GREEN GROW THE RASHES

### FRAGMENT

#### CHORUS.

Green grow the *rashes*, O; [ = rushes]  
Green grow the *rashes*, O;  
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,  
Are spent among the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',  
In ev'ry hour that passes, O:  
What signifies the life o'man  
An 't were na for the lasses, O?

For you sae *douce*, ye sneer at this, [ = dignified]  
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:  
The wisest man the warl'<sup>1</sup> e'er saw,  
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears  
Her noblest work she classes, O:  
Her prentice han' she tried on man,  
An' then she made the lasses, O.

---

1. Warl' = world. Is the allusion to Solomon?

1784 (Twenty-five)

On February 13, William Burness died at Lochlea, his affairs in utter ruin. Shortly before he passed away, he said there was one of his children of whose future he could not think without fear. Robert, who was in the room, came up to the bedside and asked: "O father, is it me you mean?" The old man said it was. He had early perceived his son's genius, and had said to his wife: "Whoever lives to see it, something extraordinary will come of that boy." It was only by becoming their father's creditors for back wages, that the children were able to save anything from the wreck of William Burness's fortune. With what they could thus obtain, Robert and Gilbert leased and stocked the farm of Mossgiel in Mauchline. There were 119 acres and the rent was ninety pounds a year. The farmhouse, which consists of only two rooms, with an attic reached by a trap-door and a ladder, is still standing. It was in this attic that Robert and his brother slept and that Robert, after his day's work, was wont to transcribe the verses which he had composed at the plough. Thither, too, after he had repaired again to the fields, his sister was wont to steal, in order to search the drawer of the deal table for the freshly written verses.

At first the new enterprise promised well. The poet was full of hope and wise resolutions, but bad seed and a late harvest spoiled their first crop and plunged him anew in despair. Under these circumstances he composed "Man was Made to Mourn," in parts of which we have probably as strong a statement of the point of view of the hungry masses as has yet been given to the world:

### MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN

Man's inhumanity to man

Makes countless thousands mourn.

See yonder poor, o'er-labour'd wight,

So abject, mean, and vile,

Who begs a brother of the earth

To give him leave to toil;



## MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN

And see his lordly fellow worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful, though a weeping wife  
And helpless offspring mourn.  
If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave,  
By nature's law designed,  
Why was an independent wish  
E'er planted in my mind?  
O Death! the poor man's dearest friend,  
The kindest and the best!  
Welcome the hour my aged limbs  
Are laid with thee at rest!  
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,  
From pomp and pleasure torn;  
But oh! a blest relief for those  
That weary-laden mourn!

Other powerful forces were also at work to distract Burns's attention from his farm work and render success in that direction impossible. His rich and genial mind was now mature. Endowed by Nature with an exquisite capacity for enjoyment, he found himself surrounded in Mossgiel by extraordinary temptations to neglect his duties. At this moment he met the belle of the parish, a young woman named Jean Armour; and fell in love more deeply than ever before. His poetical genius also began to flower with a brilliancy unexampled in the annals of literature. The year 1785, indeed, may be called the *Annus Mirabilis* of his career. As early as August, 1784, he was already meditating great things. Witness this extract from his diary: "However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay and the still more excellent Fergusson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, et cetera, immortalized in such celebrated performances, while in my dear native country, the ancient baileries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, we never have had one Scotch poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and

sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heathy mountainous source and winding sweep of Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Etterick, Tweed, etc. There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions and fragments which are daily sung by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, and yet, very frequently, nothing, not even like rhyme, or sameness of jingle, at the end of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps it might be possible for a Scotch poet, with a nice judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favourite airs.”

1785 (Twenty-six)

In January he completed the Epistle to Davie. How it came to be written has been told by Gilbert Burns: “It was, I think, in summer, 1784, when Robert and I were weeding in the kailyard, that he repeated to me the principal part of the epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert’s becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was of opinion, it would bear being printed. There was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging.” Davie was the David Sillar of the Bachelors’ Club. He was a bad poet but a very successful schoolmaster:

EPISTLE TO DAVIE

*A Brother Poet*

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond<sup>1</sup> blaw,  
And bar the doors wi’ driving snaw,  
    And *hing* us owre the *ingle*,                   [=hang; =fire]  
I set me down to pass the time,  
And spin a verse or two o’ rhyme,  
    In hamely westlin’<sup>2</sup> jingle.                   [=homely]

---

1. Ben Lomond=a mountain north of Ayrshire. Find it on the map of Scotland.

2. Westling=Burns lived in the west of Scotland.

# EPISTLE TO DAVIE

While frosty winds blaw in the drift,  
 Ben <sup>3</sup> to the chimla lug, <sup>4</sup>  
 I grudge a wee the great folk's gift,  
 That live sae bien <sup>5</sup> and snug:  
 I *tent* less, and want less [ = care]  
 Their roomy fireside;  
 But hanker and canker <sup>6</sup>  
 To see their cursed pride.

It's hardly in a body's power  
 To keep, at times, frae being sour,  
 To see how things are shared;  
 How best o'*chiels* are *whiles* in want, [ = fellows; = sometimes]  
 While *coofs* on countless thousands rant, [ = fools]  
 And ken na how to *wair*'t; [ = use it]  
 But, Davie, lad, ne'er *fash* your head; [ = worry]  
 Though we hae little gear,  
 We're fit to win our daily bread,  
 As lang's we're hale and *fier*: [ = active]  
 Mair *spier* na, nor fear na, [ = ask]  
 Auld age ne'er mind a *feg*, [ = fig]  
 The last o't, the warst o't,  
 Is only but to beg.

To lie in kilns <sup>7</sup> and barns at e'en,  
 When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,  
 Is doubtless great distress!  
 Yet then content could make us blest;  
 Even then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste  
 Of truest happiness.  
 The honest heart that's free frae a'  
 Intended fraud or guile,

---

3. Ben=in; but and ben=out and in.

4. Lug=ear or corner; a good metaphor.

5. Bien=well; a French word.

6. Hanker and canker=am dissatisfied and sore.

7. Kilns are warm.

However fortune kick the *ba'*, [ = ball]  
 Has aye some cause to smile:  
 And mind still, you'll find still  
 A comfort this nae *sma'*;  
 Nae mair then we'll care then,  
 Nae farther can we *fa'*.

What though, like commoners of air,  
 We wander out we know not where,  
 But either house or *hal'*?  
 Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,  
 The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,  
 Are free alike to all.

In days when daisies deck the ground,  
 And blackbirds whistle clear,  
 With honest joy our hearts will bound  
 To see the coming year:

On braes when we please then,  
 We'll sit and *sowth* a tune; [ = devise]  
*Syne* rhyme till't, we'll time till't, [ = then]  
 And sing't when we hae *dune*. [ = done]

It's no in titles nor in rank,  
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,  
 To purchase peace and rest;  
 It's no in making *muckle mair*;  
 It's no in books; it's no in *lear*,  
 To mak us truly blest;

[ = much]  
 [ = lore]

If happiness hae not her seat  
 And centre in the breast,  
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,  
 But never can be blest;  
 Nae treasures nor pleasures  
 Could make us happy lang;  
 The heart aye's the part aye  
 That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,  
 Wha drudge and drive through wet and dry  
 Wi' never-ceasing toil;

## EPISTLE TO DAVIE

Think ye, are we less blest than they  
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,  
As hardly worth their while?  
Alas! how aft, in haughty mood,  
God's creatures they oppress!  
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,  
They riot in excess!  
Baith careless and fearless  
Of either heaven or hell!  
Esteeming and deeming  
It's a' an idle tale.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;  
Nor make out scanty pleasures less,  
By pining at our state;  
And even should misfortunes come,  
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,  
An's thankfu' for them yet.  
They gie the wit of age to youth;  
They let us ken oursel;  
They make us see the naked truth,  
The real guid and ill..  
Though losses and crosses  
Be lessons right severe,  
There's wit there, ye'll get there,  
Ye'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!  
(To say aught less wad wrang the *cartes*, [= cards]  
And flatt'ry I detest)  
This life has joys for you and I <sup>8</sup>;  
And joys that riches ne'er could buy;  
And joys the very best.  
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,  
The lover and the frien';  
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,

---

8. I = a grammatical slip calculated to endear Burns to the masses.

And I my darling Jean!

It warms me, it charms me,  
To mention but her name:

It heats me, it beets <sup>9</sup> me,  
And sets me a' on flame!

O all ye powers who rule above!

O Thou whose very self art love!

Thou know'st my words sincere!

The life-blood streaming through my heart,

Or my more dear immortal part,

Is not more fondly dear!

When heart-corroding care and grief

Deprive my soul of rest,

Her dear idea brings relief

And solace to my breast.

Thou Being, all-seeing,

Oh, hear my fervent prayer!

Still take her, and make her

Thy most peculiar care!

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!

The smile of love, the friendly tear,

The sympathetic glow!

Long since, this world's thorny ways

Had numbered out my weary days,

Had it not been for you!

Fate still has blest me with a friend,

In every care and ill;

And oft a more endearing band,

A tie more tender still.

It lightens, it brightens

The tenebrific scene,

To meet with, and greet with

My Davie or my Jean!

---

9. Beets = adds fuel to.



## EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK

Oh, how that name inspires my style!  
The words come *skelpin*, rank and file,      [=hurrying]  
    Amaist before I ken!  
The ready measure *rins* as fine      [=runs]  
As Phœbus and the famous Nine  
    Were glow'rin' owre my pen.

My spaviet Pegasus<sup>10</sup> will limp,  
    Till ance he's fairly *het*;      [=warmed up]  
And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,  
    And rin an unco fit:<sup>11</sup>  
    But lest then, the beast then  
    Should rue this hasty ride,  
    I'll light now, and dight <sup>12</sup> now  
    His sweaty, wizened <sup>13</sup> hide.

The first of April put the poet in a happy mood and he dashed off on that day one of his best pieces:

## EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK.

*An old Scottish bard.*

While briers and woodbines budding green,  
And pairicks sraichin'<sup>1</sup> loud at e'en,  
And morning poussie whiddin seen,<sup>2</sup>  
    Inspire my Muse,  
This freedom in an unknown frien'  
    I pray excuse.

---

10. Spaviet Pegasus = spavined or lame Pegasus. Pegasus was the horse ridden in Grecian mythology by poets. Note how Burns enlarges and continues the metaphor.

11. He will hobble, hop, jump, and run an uncommon distance (literally foot).

12. Dight = wipe.

13. Wizened = wrinkled.

1. Pairicks sraichin' = partridges calling.

2. Morning poussie whiddin = hares jumping in the morning.

Note the metonymy and the antithesis.

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

On Fasten-e'en<sup>3</sup> we had a *rockin'*, [ = bee]  
 To ca' the crack<sup>4</sup> and weave<sup>5</sup> our stockin';  
 And there was muckle fun and jokin',

Ye needna doubt;  
 At length we had a hearty *yokin'* [ = set-to]  
 At sang about.

There was ae sang, amang the rest;  
 Aboon them a' it pleased me best,  
 That some kind husband had addrest  
 To some sweet wife:  
 It *thirled* the heart-strings through the breast,  
 A' to the life. [ = thrilled]

I've scarce heard ought described sae weel  
 What generous manly bosoms feel;  
 Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,  
 Or Beattie's wark?"<sup>6</sup>  
 They tauld me 't was an odd kind chiel  
 About Muirkirk.<sup>7</sup>

It *pat* me fidgin-fain<sup>8</sup> to hear't, [ = put]  
 And sae about him there I *spier't*, [ = enquire]  
 Then a' that kent him round declared  
 He had *ingine* [ = genius]  
 That nane excelled it, few cam near't,  
 It was sae fine.

That, set him to a pint of ale,  
 And either *douce* or merry tale, [ = sad]  
 Or rhymes and sangs he'd made himsel,  
 Or witty catches,

---

3. Fasten-e'en = Shrovetide.

4. Ca' the crack = chat.

7. Weave = knit.

6. See Miller's English Literature.

7. See Map of Ayrshire.

8. Fidgin-fain = excitedly eager.

## EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK

'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale, <sup>9</sup>

He had few matches.

Then up I gat, and swore an aith,

Though I shoud pawn my pleugh and *graith*,

Or die a cadger pownie's <sup>10</sup> death [ = harness]

At some dyke back,

A pint and gill I'd gie them baith

To hear your *crack*. [ = talk]

But, first and foremost, I should tell,

Amaist as soon as I could spell,

I to the *crambo-jingle* fell, [ = rhyming]

Though rude and rough,

Yet crooning to a body's sel,

Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,

But just a rhymer, like, by chance,

And hae to learning nae pretence,

Yet, what the matter?

Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,

I jingle at her.

Your critic folk may cock their nose,

And say: "How can you e'er propose,

You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,

To mak a sang?"

But, by your leaves, my learned foes,

Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,

Your Latin names for horns and stools?

If honest Nature made you fools,

What *sairs* your grammars? [ = serves]

Ye'd better taen up spades and *shools*, [ = shovels]

Or *knappin-hammers*. [ = stone-hammers]

---

9. See map of Scotland.

10. Cadger pownie's = peddler pony's.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

A set o'dull conceited *hashes*, [=fools]  
Confuse their brains in college-classes!  
They gang in *stirks*, and come out asses, [=year-old  
steers]  
Plain truth to speak;  
And syne they think to climb Parnassus <sup>11</sup>  
By dint o'Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!  
That's a' the learning I desire;  
Then though I drudge through *dub* and mire  
At pleugh or cart, [=puddles]  
My Muse, though hamely in attire,  
May touch the heart.

Oh, for a spunk o' Allan's glee,  
Or Fergusson's, the *bauld* and slee, [=bold]  
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,  
If I can hit it!  
That would be lear eneugh for me,  
If I could get it!

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,  
Though real friends I b'lieve are few,  
Yet, if your catalogue be *fou* [=full]  
I'se no insist,  
But gif ye want ae friend that's true,  
I'm on your list.

I winna *blaw* about mysel; [=blow]  
As ill I like my fauts to tell;  
But friends and folk that wish me well,  
They sometimes *roose* me; [=rouse, i.e.,  
praise]  
Though I maun own, as monie still  
As far abuse me.

---

11. Parnassus = a mountain in Greece sacred to the Muses.

## EPISTLE TO JOHN LAPRAIK

But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,  
I should be proud to meet you there;  
We'se gie ae night's discharge to Care,  
    If we forgather,  
And hae a wap o'rhymin-ware  
    Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,  
And *kirsen* him wi' reekin' water;      [= christen]  
Syne we'll sit down and tak our *whitter*,      [= drink.]  
    To cheer our heart;  
And, faith, we'se be acquainted better  
    Before we part.

Awa', ye selfish warly race,  
Wha think that havins, sense, and grace,  
Even love and friendship, should give place  
    To catch the *plack!*      [= coin]  
I dinna like to see your face,  
    Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,  
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,  
Who hold your being on the terms,  
    "Each aid the other,"  
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,  
    My friends, my brothers!

But, to conclude my lang epistle,  
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle;  
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fistle,<sup>12</sup>  
    Who am, most fervent,  
While I can either sing or whistle,  
    Your friend and servant.

The answer which this remarkable letter inspired was evidently satisfactory, for on April 21 he wrote again to Lapraik as follows:

---

12. Fistle = glow with pleasure.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

While new ca'd kye rowt at the stake <sup>1</sup>  
 And pownies reek in pleugh or *braik*, [ = harrow]  
 This hour on e'ening's edge I take,  
                     To own I'm debtor  
 To honest hearted auld Lapraik,  
                     For his kind letter.

*Forjesket* sair, with weary legs [ = tired]  
 Rattlin' the corn out-owre the *rigs*, [ = ridges]  
 Or dealing thro' among the naigs,  
                     Their ten hours' bite,  
 My awkart Muse sair pleads and begs  
                     I would na write.

The tapetless, ramfeezl'd *hizzie*,<sup>2</sup>  
 She's *saf*t at best an' something lazy: [ = soft]  
 Quo' she, "Ye ken we've been sae busy  
                     This month and mair,  
 That trowth, my head is grown right *dizzie*,  
                     An' something sair."

Her *dowff* excuses pat me mad; [ = spiritless]  
 "Conscience," says I, "ye *thowless* jade! [ = thewless]  
 "I'll write, an' that a hearty *blaud*, [ = sheet]  
                     This vera night;  
 So dinna ye affront your trade,  
                     But rhyme it right."

There is more of the epistle, but it is commonplace; the bard's weary legs evidently interfered with the flow of his thoughts. The tide of inspiration, however, soon returned; in May we find the poet sending a fourth poetical epistle, this time to William Simson, schoolmaster, Ochiltree. In part it is as follows:

---

1. New ca'd kye rowt at the stake = New tied cows bellow at the stake.

2. The tapetless ramfeezled *hizzie* = the silly tired jade.



## EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMSON

My sense wad be in a *creel*, [ = whirl  
Should I but dare a hope to *speel* [ = climb]  
Wi' Allan or wi' Gilbertfield,  
The *braes* o' fame; [ = heights]  
Or Fergusson, the writer chiel,  
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts  
I'll suited law's dry, musty arts!  
My curse upon your *whunstane* hearts, [ = stony]  
Ye Enbrugh gentry!  
The *tithe* o' what ye waste at cartes [ = tenth]  
Wad stowed his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes in my head,  
Or lasses gie my heart a *screed*, — [ = wrench]  
As whiles they're like to be my deed,<sup>1</sup>  
O sad disease!  
I *kittle* up my rustic reed; [ = tune]  
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila now may fidge fu' fain,<sup>2</sup>  
She's gotten poets o' her ain;  
Chiels wha their chanter's winna hain,<sup>3</sup>  
But tune their lays,  
Till echoes a' resound again  
Her weel-sung praise.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ramsay and famous Fergusson  
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;  
Yarrow and' Tweed, to mony a tune,  
Owre Scotland rings;  
While Irwine, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon  
Naebody sings.<sup>4</sup>

---

1. As whiles, etc. = as sometimes they are likely to cause my death.

2. Auld Coila now, etc. = Ayrshire may now rejoice.

3. Chiels wha, etc. = fellows who will not spare their bagpipes.

4. Study the map of Scotland.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,<sup>5</sup>

Glide sweet in mony a tunefu' line:

But, Willie, set your *fit* to mine,

[ = foot ]

An' cock your crest;

We'll *gar* our streams an' burnies shine

[ = make ]

Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,

Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,

Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,

Whare glorious Wallace<sup>6</sup>

Aft bure the gree,<sup>7</sup> as story tells

Frae Southron billies.<sup>8</sup>

At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood

But boils up in a spring-time flood!

Oft have our fearless fathers strode

By Wallace' side,

Still pressing onward, red-wat-shod,<sup>9</sup>

Or glorious died.

O sweet are Coila's houghs an' woods,

Where *lintwhites* chant among the buds,

[ = linnets ]

And *jinkin* hares, in amorous *whids*, [ = dodging; = capers ]

Their loves enjoy;

While through the braes the *cushat* croods

[ = pigeon ]

Wi wailfu' cry.

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me,

When winds rave thro' the naked tree;

Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree

Are hoary gray;

Or blinding drifts wild furious flee,

Dark'ning the day!

5. Are these rivers? If so, where?

6. Glorious Wallace = see the biographical dictionary.

7. Aft bure the gree = often bore the victory.

8. Southron billies = southern fellow = whom?

9. Red-wat-shod = red-wet-shod. Carlyle says this phrase is almost too frightfully accurate for art.

## TO A MOUSE

O Nature! a' they shews an' forms  
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!  
Whether the summer kindly warms,  
    Wi' life an' light;  
Or winter howls in gusty storms,  
    The lang, dark night.

The Muse, nae poet ever *fand* her, [ = found]  
Till by himsel he learned to wander,  
Adown some trottin' burn's meander, [ = brook]  
    An' no think lang:  
O sweet to stray, an' pensive ponder  
    A heart-felt song.

The autumn was rich in its harvest of song. Halloween, which is said to be accurate in its portrayal of customs and is certainly a favorite with Burns's countrymen, was the work of this season. One day in November, while the poet was ploughing, a mouse was turned up with her nest by the share. John Blane, a boy who was helping Burns, like the thoughtless youth that he was, ran after the creature to kill it, but was checked and recalled by his master, who, he observed, became thereafter thoughtful and abstracted. A few days later Burns repeated to him the following lines:

## TO A MOUSE

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,  
Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou needna start awa' sae hasty,  
    Wi' *bickering* brattle! [scurrying scamper]  
I wad be *laith* to rin and chase thee, [ = loth]  
    Wi' murd'ring *pattle*! [ = paddle]

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
And justifies that ill opinion,  
    Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor earthborn companion,  
    And fellow-mortal!

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

I doubtna, whiles, but thou may thieve;  
 What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
 A daimen icker in a thrave<sup>1</sup>

'S a sma' request:  
 I'll get a blessin' wi' the *lave*, [ = rest  
 And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!  
 Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!  
 And naething now to *big* a new ane [ = build]  
 O' *foggage* green, [ = vegetation]  
 And bleak December's winds ensuin,  
 Baith *snell* and keen! [ = furious]

Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,  
 And weary winter comin' fast,  
 And cozie here, beneath the blast,  
 Thou thought to dwell,  
 Till, crash! the cruel *coulter* passed [ploughshare]  
 Out through thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves and *stibble* [ = stubble]  
 Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!  
 Now thou's turned out for a' thy trouble,  
 But house or *hald*, [ = without; = home]  
 To *thole* the winter's sleety dribble, [ = endure]  
 And *cranreuch* cauld! [ = frost]

But, Mousie, thou art no thy *lane*, [ = lone]  
 In proving foresight may be vain:  
 The best-laid schemes o' mice and men  
 Gang aft a-gley,  
 And lea'e us nought but grief and pain,  
 For promised joy.

---

1. A daimen icker in a thrave = an occasional ear in a large shock.

## TO A MOUSE

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But, och! I backward cast my e'e  
On prospects drear!  
And forward, though I canna see,  
I guess and fear.

Andrew Lang says there is no more beautiful example of sympathy with the beasts, even in the poetry of Burns. The field where the mouse was unhoused and made immortal on the spot is still pointed out to the visitor at Mossgiel.

Hardly a month now remained of the year 1785. The farm work for the season was practically at an end. The increased leisure which the poet found at his disposal enabled him to produce two remarkable poems, *The Jolly Beggars*, which Carlyle considered the finest of his works, and *the Cotter's Saturday Night*, which has certainly made him familiar and dear to more people than any other piece which he wrote. Two poems could not be more different. *The Jolly Beggars* describes the drunken carouse of a gang of debauched mendicants. Its spirit is immense, its realism unquestionable. Nobody but a great genius could have written it. When we turn from its wild revelry to the old fashioned piety of *the Cotter's Saturday Night* we cannot fail to be impressed with the range of Burns's sympathies. The homely devotion depicted in the one poem is drawn with the same understanding as the blasphemous abandon of the other. The old Scotchwoman who disdained the Cotter because in it she found nothing described except what she could see in any Scotch cottage on any Saturday night and the great American poet who wrote,

"With clearer eyes I saw the worth  
Of life among the lowly;  
The bible at his Cotter's hearth  
Has made my own more holy,"

When their joint verdict is considered, reveal with tolerable accuracy the secret of the poem's power and the extent of

its influence. We have from Gilbert Burns the following note concerning its composition: "Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a sober head of a family introducing family-worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. The hint of the plan and title of the poem was taken from Fergusson's *Farmer's Ingle*. When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favorable, on the Sunday afternoons (those precious breathing times to the laboring part of the community), and enjoyed such Sundays as would make one regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. I do not recollect to have heard anything by which I was more highly electrified. The fifth and sixth stanzas and the eighteenth thrilled with a peculiar ecstasy through my soul."

## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

Inscribed to Robert Aiken, Esq.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joy and destiny obscure;  
 Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
 The short and simple annals of the poor."

—GRAY.

My loved, my honored, much-respected friend!  
 No mercenary bard his homage pays;  
 With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end;  
 My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise  
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays—  
 The lowly train in life's sequestered scene;  
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;  
 What Aiken in a cottage would have been:  
 Ah, though his worth unknown, far happier there,  
 I ween!



## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

November chill blows loud wi' angry *sugh*; [=sigh]  
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;  
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh,  
The black'ning trains o' *crows* to their repose:  
The toil-worn cotter frae his labor goes, — [=crows]  
This night his weekly moil is at an end, —  
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward  
bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;  
Th' expectant wee things, toddlin', *stacher* through  
[=stagger]  
To meet their dad, wi' *flichterin'* noise and glee.  
[=fluttering]  
His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily,  
His clean hearthstane, his thriftie wifie's smile,  
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,  
Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,  
And makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,  
At service out, amang the farmers roun':  
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin  
A *cannie* errand to a neebor town; [=easy]  
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,  
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,  
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw new gown,  
Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,  
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeigned, brothers and sisters meet,  
And each for other's weelfare kindly *spiers*.  
[=enquires]

The social hours, swift-winged, unnoticed fleet;  
Each tells the *uncos* that he sees or hears; [=news]  
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Anticipation forward points the view.

The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,  
*Gars* auld claes look amaist as weel's the new—  
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due. [=makes]

Their master's and their mistress's command,  
The younkers a' warnèd to obey;  
And mind their labors wi' an *eydent* hand, [=attentive]  
And ne'er, though out o' sight, to *jauk* or play:  
"And oh! be sure to fear the Lord alway! [=joke]  
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!  
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
Implore His counsel and assisting might:  
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door:  
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,  
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,  
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.  
The wily mother sees the conscious flame  
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;  
Wi' heart-struck anxious care inquires his name,  
While Jenny *hafflins* is afraid to speak; [=half]  
Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild, worth-  
less rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him *ben*; [=in]  
A strappin' youth; he taks the mother's eye;  
Blithe, Jenny sees the visit's no ill-ta'en;  
The father *cracks* of horses, pleughs, and kye. [=talks]  
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,  
But *blate* and *laithfu'*, scarce can weel behave;  
[=bashful, backward]  
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy  
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;  
Weel pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

Oh, happy love! where love like this is found!

Oh, heartfelt raptures! bliss beyond compare!

I've paced much this weary, mortal round,

And sage experience bids me this declare:—

If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,

One cordial in this melancholy vale,

'T is when a youthful, loving, modest pair

In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,

Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening  
gale.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,

A wretch, a villain, lost to love and truth,

That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,

Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?

Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!

Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exiled?

Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,

Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?

Then paints the ruined maid, and their distraction wild!

But now the supper crowns their simple board, —

The *healsome parritch*, chief o' Scotia's food;

[= wholesome porridge]

The soupe their only *hawkie* does afford, [= cow]

That 'yont the *hallan* snugly chows her cood:

[= partition]

The dame brings forth, in complimentary mood,

To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck,<sup>1</sup> fell,

And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;

The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,

How 't was a towmont auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.<sup>2</sup>

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,

They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;

The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,

The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,

---

1. Weel-hained kebbuck, fell = well-kept cheese, strong.

2. A towmont, etc. = A twelvemonth old since flax was in bloom.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

His lyart haffets<sup>3</sup> wearing thin and bare;  
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
He *wales* a portion with judicious care, [= chooses]  
And "Let us worship God!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:  
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise,  
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name,  
Or noble *Elgin* beets the heavenward flame, [= fans]  
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:  
Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;  
The tickled ears no heartfelt raptures raise;  
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page—  
How Abram was the friend of God on high;  
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;  
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;  
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;  
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume<sup>4</sup> is the theme—  
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed:  
How HE, who bore in heaven the second name,  
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;  
How His first followers and servants sped;  
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:  
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,  
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,  
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by  
Heaven's command.

---

3. Lyart haffets = gray hair.

4. The Christian volume = The New Testament.

## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,  
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:  
Hope "springs exultant on triumphant wing,"<sup>5</sup>  
That thus they all shall meet in future days:  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear;  
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.  
Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
In all the pomp of method and of art,  
When men display to congregations wide  
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!  
The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,  
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;  
But haply, in some cottage far apart,  
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;  
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way;  
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:  
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,  
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
That HE who stills the raven's clamorous nest,  
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,  
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
For them and for their little ones provide;  
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.  
From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad;  
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
"An honest man's the noblest work of God;"<sup>6</sup>  
And certes, in fair Virtue's heavenly road,  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind:  
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,  
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

---

5. Quoted from Pope's Windsor Forest.

6. Pope. Essay on Man.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,  
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil

Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!

And oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent  
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!

Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,  
A virtuous populace may rise the while,  
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide,

That streamed through Wallace's undaunted heart,  
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,

Or nobly die, the second glorious part,  
(The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,  
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)

Oh never, never, Scotia's realm desert;  
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,  
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

Even here the record for 1785 does not end. The Address to the Deil still remains:

### ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

*"O Prince! O chief of many-thron'd pow'rs,  
That led th' embattl'd seraphim to war—"*

*Milton.*

O Thou! whatever title suit thee—

Auld Hornie<sup>1</sup>, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,<sup>2</sup>

Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,

Clos'd under hatches,

Spairges about<sup>3</sup> the brunstane cootie,

To scaud poor wretches! [=scald]

---

1. Auld Hornie = Old Horns.

2. Clootie = Hoofy = Cloven Hoof.

3. Spairges about, etc. = scatters around the contents of a pail full of brimstone. Cootie = pail.



## ADDRESS TO THE DEIL

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,  
An' let poor dammèd bodies be;  
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,  
    Ev'n to a deil,  
To *skelp* an' scaud poor dogs like me,      [=scalp]  
    An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame;  
Far ken'd an' noted is thy name;  
An' tho' yon *lowin' heuch's* thy hame, [=blazing pit]  
    Thou travels far;  
An' faith! thou neither lag, nor lame,\*  
    Nor blate, nor scaur.

Whiles, ragin' like a roarin' lion,  
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin';  
Whiles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin',  
    Tirlin the kirks;<sup>5</sup>  
Whiles, in the human bosom pryin,  
    Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my rev'rend graunie say  
In lanely glens ye like to stray;  
Or where auld ruin'd castles gray  
    Nod to the moon,  
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way  
    Wi' *eldritch* croon.      [=awful]

When twilight did my graunie summon,  
To say her pray'rs, douce, honest woman!  
Aft' yont the dyke she's heard you bummin  
    Wi' eerie drone;  
Or, rustlin, thro' the *boortrees* comin,      [=elders]  
    Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,  
The stars shot down wi' *sklentín* light, [=slanting]  
Wi' you mysel' I gat a fright,

4. Lag nor lame, etc. = slow, lame, bashful, or afraid.

5. Tirlin the kirks = shaking the churches.

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Ayont the *lough* [= pond]  
 Ye, lik a *rash-buss*, stood in sight, [= rush]  
 Wi' wavin sough.

The cudgel in my *nieve* did shake, [= fist]  
 Each bristled hair stood like a stake,  
 When wi' an eldritch, *stoor* "quaick, quaick," [= bass]  
 Amang the springs,  
 Awa' ye *squattered* like a drake, [= flapped]  
 On whistlin wings.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lang syne in Eden's bonie yard,  
 When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,  
 An' all the soul of love they shar'd,  
 The raptur'd hour,  
 Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry swaird,  
 In shady bow'r:

Then you, ye auld *snick-drawing* dog! [= latch-  
 Ye cam to Paradise incog, lifting]  
 An' play'd on man a cursed *brogue*, [= trick]  
 (Black be your fa'!)  
 An' gied the infant warld a *shog*, [= shock]  
 'Maist ruin'd a'.

\* \* \* \* \*

But a' your doin's to rehearse,  
 Your wily snares an' *fechtin* fierce, [fighting]  
 Sin that day Michael did you pierce,  
 Down to this time,  
 Wad *ding* a Lallan tongue or Erse,<sup>6</sup> [= surpass]  
 In prose or rhyme.

---

6. Wad ding, etc. = would be too much for a Lowland or Highland tongue.

## ADDRESS TO THE DEIL

An' now, auld Cloots, I ken you're thinkin,  
A certain bardie's rantin, drinkin,  
Some luckless hour will send him *linkin* [= hurrying]  
    To your black pit;  
But faith! he'll turn a comer *jinkin*,      [= dodging]  
    An' cheat you yet.

But fare-you-weel, auld Nickle-ben!  
O wad ye tak a thought an' men!  
Ye *aiblins* might—I dinna ken—      [= perhaps]  
    Still hae a stake;<sup>7</sup>  
I'm wae to think upon your den,  
    Ev'n for your sake!<sup>8</sup>

### 1786 (Twenty-seven)

The poet's pen was still busy. Early in the year he composed *The Twa Dogs*, one of his happiest efforts. It has been pleasantly referred to by Whittier in his poem written on receiving a sprig of heather and the poems of Burns from a friend in Scotland:

“Bees hummed, birds twittered, overhead  
    I heard the squirrel leaping;  
The good dog listened while I read  
    And wagged his tail in keeping.

“I watched him while, in sportive mood,  
    I read the *Twa Dogs*' story,  
And half believed he understood  
    The poet's allegory.

As Principal Shairp has pointed out, the *Cotter's Dog* and the *Laird's Dog*, in spite of their moralizing, are true dogs in all their actions.

---

7. Still have a chance.

8. Carlyle, commenting on this poem, says that Burns's heart was so kind that he could not hate even the devil with right orthodoxy.

THE TWA DOGS.

A Tale

'T was in that place o' Scotland's isle  
That bears the name o' auld King Coil,  
Upon a bonie day in June,  
When wearin' thro' the afternoon,  
Twa dogs, the werena *thrang* at hame, [= tied]  
Foregather'd ance upon a time.

The first I'll name, they ca'd him Caesar,  
Was keepit for His Honor's pleasure:  
His hair, his size, his mouth, his *lugs*, [= ears]  
Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;  
But *whalpit* some far place abroad, [= born]  
Where sailors gang to fish for cod.<sup>1</sup>

His locked, lettered, braw brass collar  
Shew'd him the gentleman an' scholar;  
But tho' he was o' high degree,  
The fient a pride nae pride <sup>2</sup> had he.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tither was a ploughman's collie,  
A rhyming, ranting, roving billie,  
Wha<sup>3</sup> for his friend and comrade had him,  
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,  
After some dog in Highland sang,  
Was made lang *syne* — Lord knows how lang. [= since]  
[= ago]

He was a *gash* an' faithfu' *tyke*, [= clever; = dog]  
As ever *lap* a *sheugh* or dyke; [= leapt; = ditch]  
His honest, *sonsie*, *baws'nt* face [= happy; = white-  
Aye gat him friends in ilka place; striped]  
His breast was black, his *touzie* back [= hairy]  
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;

---

1. Caesar—was he a Newfoundland dog?  
2. The fient a pride = the deuce of pride.  
3. Antecedent?

## THE TWA DOGS

His *gawsie* tail, wi' upward curl, [=handsome]  
 Hung o'er his *hurdies* wi' a swirl. [=hips]  
 Nae doubt but they were *fain* o' ither, [=fond]  
 An unco *pack an' thick* thegither; [=intimate]  
 Wi' social nose whiles snuff'd an *snowkit*<sup>4</sup> [=poked]  
 Whiles mice an *moudieworts* they *howkit*; [=moles;  
 Whiles scour'd awa' in lang excursion, =hunted]  
 An' worried ither in diversion;  
 Until wi' daffin' weary grown  
 Upon a knowe they sat them down,  
 An' there began a lang digression  
 About the "lords o' the creation."

### Caesar.

I've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,  
 What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;  
 An' when the gentry's life I saw  
 What way poor bodies liv'd *ava*. [=at all]

\* \* \* \* \*

### Luath

Trowth, Caesar, whiles they're *flash't* eneugh;  
 [=troubled]  
 A cottar *howkin* in a sheugh, [=digging]  
 Wi' dirty stanes *biggin* a dyke, [=building]  
 Baring a quarry, an' sic like;  
 Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,  
 A *smytrie* o' wee *duddie* weans, [=tribe;=ragged]  
 An' nought but his *han'-daurk*, to keep [=manual  
 labor]  
 Them right an' tight in *thack an' rape*, [=thatch rope]  
 An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,  
 Like loss o' health or want o' masters,  
 Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,  
 An' they maun starve o' cauld an' hunger:  
 But how it comes, I never kent yet,  
 They're maistly wonderfu' contented,  
 An' *buirdly* chiels, an' clever hizzies, [=rugged]  
 Are bred in sic a way as this is.

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

## *Caesar*

But then to see how ye're negleckit,  
How huff'd an' cuff'd an' disrespeckit.

\* \* \* \* \*

I've notic'd, on our laird's court-day, —  
An' mony a time my heart's been wae, —  
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,  
How they maun thole a factor's snash<sup>4</sup>;  
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear  
He'll apprehend them, *poind* their gear; [=attach]  
While they maun stand, wi' aspect humble,  
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble.

## *Luath*

They're no sae wretched's ane wad think.  
Tho' constantly on *poortith's* brink, [=poverty]  
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight  
The view o't gies them little fright.

Then chance and fortune are sae guided,  
They're aye in less or mair provided:  
An' tho' fatigued wi' close employment  
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,  
Their *grushie* weans an' faithfu' wives; [=thriving]  
The prattling things are just their pride,  
That sweetens a' their fire-side.

An' whiles twal pennie worth o' nappy<sup>5</sup>  
Can mak the bodies unco happy:  
They lay aside their private cares  
To mind the church an' state affairs.

\* \* \* \* \*

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass<sup>6</sup> returns  
They get the jovial rantin *kirns*, [=harvest homes]  
When rural life, of ev'ry station,

---

4. Thole a factor's snash = endure an agent's insolence.

5. Twal pennie worth o' nappy = 24 cents, worth of ale.

6. Hallowmass = October 31.



## THE TWA DOGS

Unites in common recreation;  
Love blinks, Wit *slaps*, an' social Mirth      [=hits]  
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,  
They bar the door on frosty win's;

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*  
The cantie auld folks cracking *crouse*,      [=rejoice]  
The young anes rantin thro' the house—  
My heart has been sae *fain* to see them,      [=glad]  
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them

Still it's owre true that ye hae said,  
Sic game is now owre often play'd;  
There's mony a creditable stock  
O'decent, honest, *fawsont* folk,      [=seemly]  
Are riven out, baith root an' branch,  
Some rascal's pirdefu' greed to quench,  
Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster,  
In favour wi' some gentle master,  
Wha, *aiblins*, thrang a parliamentin,      [=perchance]  
For Britain's guid his saul indentin.<sup>7</sup>

### Caesar

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it:  
For Britain's guid! guid faith! I doubt it.  
Say rather, *gaun* as Premiers lead him:      [=going]  
An' saying ay or no's they bid him:  
At operas an plays parading,  
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading:  
Or maybe, in a frolic daft,  
To Hague or Calais take a waft  
To mak a tour an' tak a whirl,  
To learn bon ton, — an' see the warl'

There, at Vienna or Versailles,  
He rives his father's auld entails;<sup>8</sup>

---

7. For Britain's guid, etc.= who, perhaps, goes into politics, endangering his soul for Britain's good.

8. Rives his father's auld entails=wastes the property inherited from his father.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Or by Madrid he takes the rout,  
To thrum guitars an' fecht wi' *nowt*.<sup>9</sup> [=cattle]

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

For Britain's guid! for her destruction!  
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

### *Luath*

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the *gate* [=way]  
They waste sae mony a braw estate!  
Are we sae *foughten* an' harass'd [=driven]  
For gear to gang that gate at last?

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

But will ye tell me, Master Caesar,  
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?  
Nae could nor hunger e'er can steer them,  
The very thought o't need na fear them.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

### *Caesar*

It's true, they need na *stawe* or sweat, [=stew]  
Thro' winter's cauld or simmer's heat:  
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,  
An' fill auld age wi' gripes an' *granes*: [=groans]  
But human bodies are sic fools,  
For a' their colleges an' schools,  
That when nae real ills perplex them,  
They mak enow themsel's to vex them;  
An' aye the less they hae to *sturt* them, [=harass]  
In like proportion, less will hurt them.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

9. "Mark the power of that one word "*nowt*." If the poet had said that our young fellow went to Spain to fight with bulls, there would have been some dignity in the thing, but think of his going all that way to 'fecht wi' *nowt*.' It is felt at once to be ridiculous."  
*Thomas Avid.*

## THE TWA DOGS

By this, the sun was out of sight,  
An' darker gloamin brought the night;  
The *bum-clock* humm'd wi' lazy drone; [ = beetle]  
The kye stood rowtin i' the *loan*; [ = lane]  
When up they gat an' shook their *lugs*; [ = ears]  
Rejoic'd they werena men but dogs;  
An' each took off his several way,  
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

In an Epistle to James Smith, written shortly after, Burns tells why he wrote poetry and his statement is worth remembering:

Some rhyme a neibor's name to lash;  
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;  
Some rhyme to court the countra *clash* [ = gossip]  
An' raise a din;  
For me an aim I never *fash*; [ = bother about]  
I rhyme for fun."

This was followed by an Address to the Unco Guid, designed for the especial edification of those who are—

"Sae gude yoursel',  
Sae pious and sae holy,  
Ye've nought to do but mark an' tell  
Your neibours' fauts an' folly!"

It closes with two admirable stanzas:

"Then gently scan your brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman;  
Tho' they may gang a *kennin* wrang, [ = little]  
To step aside is human:  
One point must still be greatly dark,—  
The moving Why they do it;  
And just as lamely can ye mark  
How far perhaps they rue it.

"Who knows the heart, 't is He alone  
Decidedly can try us;  
He knows each chord, its various tone,  
Each spring, its various bias:  
Then at the balance let's be mute;  
We never can adjust it;  
What's done we partly may compute,  
But know not what's resisted."

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Burns, it will be observed, was finding subjects for poetry where few men have sought and fewer found them. Perhaps his most remarkable feat in this direction was performed about this time. At church he saw a louse upon the bonnet of a rather showily dressed female, and addressed some lines to the insect. The last stanza has passed into a proverb:

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see oursels as ithers see us,  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us  
An' foolish notion."

On March 20 he wrote his name Burness for the last time. April and the spring plowing were now at hand. One day, while guiding the share in the field, the poet turned down a daisy. The result was a fit companion piece for the lines to a Mouse. The lines to a Daisy have always been favorites. A poet's appreciation of them has been expressed by Ebenezer Eliot:

"Would that I were the Daisy  
That sank beneath his plow,  
Or bonny lark, companion meet!  
Say, are they nothing now?"

### TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

On turning one down with the plough in April, 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,  
Thou's met me in an evil hour;  
For I maun crush amang the *stoure* [= dust]  
Thy slender stem:  
To spare thee now is past my power,  
Thou bonny gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,  
The bonny lark, companion meet,  
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,  
Wi' speckled breast,  
When upward-springing, blithe, to greet  
The purpling east!

## TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY

Cauld blew the bitter biting north  
Upon thy early, humble birth;  
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
    Amid the storm,  
Scarce reared above the parent earth  
    Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,  
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield,  
But thou, beneath the random *biel* [=protection]  
    O' clod or stane,  
Adorns the *histie* stibble-field,                   [=dry]  
    Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,  
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,  
Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
    In humble guise;  
But now the share uptears thy bed,  
    And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,  
Sweet flowret of the rural shade!  
By love's simplicity betrayed,  
    And guileless trust,  
Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid  
    Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,  
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!  
Unskilful he to note the card  
    Of prudent lore,  
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,  
    And whelm him o'er'

Such fate to suffering worth is given,  
Who long with wants and woes has striven,  
By human pride or cunning driven  
    To misery's brink,  
Till, wrenched of every stay but Heaven,  
    He, ruined, sink!

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Even thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,  
That fate is thine—no distant date;  
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,  
Full on thy bloom,  
Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight  
Shall be thy doom.

The autobiographic references are to real circumstances. Burns was in deep trouble. Financially embarrassed, in disgrace with the church on account of his ecclesiastical poems, his reputation for morality seriously impaired, he found himself at this moment deserted by his sweetheart and bitterly persecuted by her father. So uncomfortable did he find his situation, indeed, that he decided to emigrate to the West Indies. In order to raise funds for the passage, he undertook, at the suggestion of a friend, the publication of a volume of his poems. "The book," says one spirited biographer of the poet, "which Scotland regards as the most precious in her possession, was published to raise nine pounds to carry the author into exile." It was issued at Kilmarnock in August, under the title: *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns*. The boy Burness, as Will Carleton happily puts it, "had become the man Burns."

In the months just preceding this event, Burns's career is sufficiently interesting. In May we find him sending to Andrew, the son of Robert Aiken, an epistle which has since been ranked among his happiest efforts:

### EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,  
A something to have sent you,  
Though it should serve nae ither end  
Than just a kind memento;  
But how the subject-theme may gang,  
Let time and chance determine;  
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,  
Perhaps turn out a sermon.

## EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND

Ye'll try the world fu' soon, my lad  
And, Andrew dear, believe me,  
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,  
And muckle they may grieve ye.  
For care and trouble set your thought,  
Even when your end's attained;  
And a' your views may come to nought,  
Where every nerve is strained.

I'll no say men are villains a';  
The real, hardened wicked,  
Wha hae nae check but human law,  
Are to a few restricted:  
But, och! mankind are unco weak,  
And little to be trusted;  
If self the wavering balance shake,  
It's rarely right adjusted!

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,  
Their fate we shouldna censure,  
For still th' important end of life  
They equally may answer:  
A man may hae an honest heart,  
Though poortith hourly stare him;  
A man may tak a neebor's part,  
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Aye free, aff han' your story tell,  
When wi' a bosom crony;  
But still keep something to yoursel  
Ye scarcely tell to ony.

Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can  
Frae critical dissection,

But *keek* through every other man  
Wi' sharpened, sly inspection.

[=peer]

The sacred *lowe* o' weel-placed love,  
Luxuriantly indulge it;  
But never tempt th' illicit rove,  
Though naething should divulge it.

[=flame]



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
The hazard o' concealing;  
But, och! it hardens a' within,  
And petrifies the feeling!

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,  
Assiduous wait upon her;  
And gather gear by every wile  
That's justified by honor;  
Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Not for a train-attendant,  
But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip,  
To haud the wretch in order;  
But where ye feel your honor grip,  
Let that aye be your border:  
Its slightest touches, instant pause—  
Debar a' side-pretences;  
And resolutely keep its laws,  
Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere  
Must sure become the creature;  
But still the preaching cant forbear,  
And even the rigid feature.  
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,  
Be complaisance extended;  
An Atheist laugh's a poor exchange  
For Deity offended!

When ranting round in Pleasure's ring,  
Religion may be blinded;  
Or if she gie a random sting,  
It may be little minded;  
But when on life we're tempest-driven,  
A conscience but a canker,  
A correspondence fixed wi' Heaven  
Is sure a noble anchor!

## ADDRESS TO THE TOOTHACHE

Adieu, dear, amiable youth:

Your heart can ne'er be wanting!

May prudence, fortitude, and truth,

Erect your brow undaunting!

In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"

Still daily to grow wiser;

And may you better reckon the rede

Than ever did th' adviser!

In spite of his trouble the stream of inspiration continued to flow clear and strong. In one poem of this period occurs the happy proverb:

"But facts are chieles that *winna ding*,      [= will not budge]  
An *downa* be disputed."      [= cannot]

During these troubled days, also, he continued to extract even from an attack of toothache a rich element of fun; at least one would infer as much from the following poem:

## ADDRESS TO THE TOOTHACHE.

My curse upon your venom'd stang,

That shoots my tortur'd gums alang,

An' thro' my *lug* gies sic a twang      [= ear]

Wi' gnawing vengeance,

Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,

Like racking engines!

When fevers burn, or agues freeze us,

Rheumatics gnaw, or colics squeeze us,

Our neibor's sympathy can ease us,

Wi' pitying moan;

But thee—thou hell o' a' diseases—

They mock our groan.

Adown my beard the slavers trickle,

I throw the wee stools o'er the mickle,

While round the fire the *giglets* keckle,      [= girls giggle]

To see me *loup*,      [= leap]

An', ravin mad, I wish a heckle<sup>1</sup>

---

1. Heckle = flax-dresser's comb.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Ware in their *doup*! [=throat]  
Of a' the numerous human *dools*, [=griefs]  
Ill *hairsts*, daft bargains, cutty stools,<sup>2</sup> [=harvest]  
Or worthy friends rak'd i' the *mools*,— [=jails]  
Sad sight to see!  
The tricks o' knaves, or fash o' fools,  
Thou bear'st the *gree*! [=prize]

Where'er that place be priests ca' hell,  
Where a' the tones o' misery yell,  
An' ranked plagues their numbers tell,  
In dreadfu' *raw*, [=row]  
Thou, Toothache, surely bear'st the bell,  
Amang them a'.

O thou grim, mischief-making chiel,  
That gars the notes o' discord squeel,  
Till daft mankind aft dance a reel  
In gore, a shoe thick,  
Gie a' the faes o' Scotland's weal  
A towmond's toothache!

After all, he was not without consolations. After being jilted by Jean Armour, he met Mary Campbell, a servant at a neighboring farm, and made successful love to her. The song, *Flow Gently, Sweet Afton*, is a record of their courtship:

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes;  
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream;  
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.  
Thou stock-dove whose echo resounds through the glen,  
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den;  
Thou green-crested lapwing thy screaming forbear;  
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

---

2. Cutty stools = stools of repentance.

## FLOW GENTLY, SWEET AFTON

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,  
Far marked with the courses of clear winding rills  
There daily I wander as noon rises high,  
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,  
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;  
There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,  
The sweet-scented *birk* shades my Mary and me.  
[= birch]

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,  
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;  
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,  
As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;  
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream;  
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

She promised to be his wife; the day was set for their marriage; and it was settled that she should return to her home in the Highlands to prepare for that event. Before she took her departure, they spent a day—the second Sunday in May—together on the banks of the Ayr. After plighting troth, they stood on opposite sides of the brook, dipped their hands in the water, exchanged Bibles, and parted. Burns never saw her again. Five months later, she was dead. When the news came to the poet, he moved to a window in order to read the letter that contained, it and his sister could see by his looks that he was deeply affected. However, he said nothing and the family respected his grief too much to question him. He went out without saying a word. Years afterward, he commemorated their love in two matchless songs:

# BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

## HIGHLAND MARY.

TUNE—*Katherine Ogie.*

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around  
The castle o' Montgomery,  
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,  
Your waters never *drumlie!* [=muddy]  
There simmer first unfauld her robes,  
And there the langest tarry;  
For there I took the last fareweel  
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,  
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,  
As underneath their fragrant shade  
I clasped her to my bosom!  
The golden hours, on angel wings,  
Flew o'er me and my dearie;  
For dear to me as light and life  
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' monie a vow, and locked embrace,  
Our parting was fu' tender;  
And, pledging aft to meet again,  
We tore oursels asunder:  
But, oh! fell death's untimely frost,  
That nipt my flower sae early!  
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,  
That wraps my Highland Mary!

Oh, pale, pale now, those rosy lips  
I aft hae kissed sae fondly,  
And closed for aye the sparkling glance  
That dwelt on me sae kindly!  
And mouldering now in silent dust  
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!  
But still within my bosom's core  
Shall live my Highland Mary.

## TO MARY IN HEAVEN

### TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

Thou ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,  
That lov'st to greet the early morn,  
Again thou usher'st in the day  
My Mary from my soul was torn.  
O Mary! dear departed shade!  
Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,  
Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
Where by the winding Ayr we met,  
To live one day of parting love?  
Eternity will not efface  
Those records dear of transports past,  
Thy image at our last embrace, —  
Ah! little thought we't was our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kissed his pebbled shore,  
O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green;  
The fragrant birch and hawthorn hoar  
Twined am'rous round the raptured scene;  
The flowers sprang wanton to be prest,  
The birds sang love on every spray —  
Till too, too soon, the glowing west  
Proclaimed the speed of wingèd day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,  
And fondly broods with miser care;  
Time but th' impression deeper makes,  
As streams their channels deeper wear.  
My Mary! dear departed shade!  
Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?  
Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

In the meantime the volume of poems had passed through the press at Kilmarnock. The opening piece was

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

The Twa Dogs. Five hundred copies were printed. Burns himself had embarked on the undertaking with little confidence; he had written to a friend that the publication was the last foolish thing he intended to do. His misgivings, however, proved groundless. Success was rapid. In a few weeks the edition was exhausted. The poet's share of the profits came to 20 pounds. He had already obtained a position in Jamaica. He now hastened to take passage in a ship that was nearly ready to sail. To his friends he said farewell. To his country he addressed some touching lines:

The gloomy night is gathering fast;  
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;  
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain;  
I see it driving o'er the plain.  
The hunter now has left the moor;  
The scattered coveys meet secure;  
While here I wander, pressed with care,  
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her ripening corn,  
By early Winter's ravage torn;  
Across her placid, azure sky,  
She sees the scowling tempest fly;  
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave—  
I think upon the stormy wave,  
Where many a danger I must dare,  
Far from the bonny banks of Ayr.

'Tis not the surging billow's roar,  
'Tis not that fatal deadly shore;  
Though death in every shape appear,  
The wretched have no more to fear!  
But round my heart the ties are bound,  
That heart transpierced with many a wound:  
These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,  
To leave the bonny banks of Ayr.



## A BARD'S EPITAPH

Farewell old Coila's hills and dales,  
Her heathy moors and winding vales;  
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,  
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!  
Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!  
My peace with these, my love with those:  
The bursting tears my heart declare;  
Farewell the bonny banks of Ayr!

Looking upon himself as a man already dead to all that he had hitherto held dear, he composed what has been called his most sincere and touching effort at self criticism:

### A BARD'S EPITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,  
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,  
Owre blate to seek, owreproud to *snool*, [= flatter.]  
Let him draw near;  
And owre this grassy heap sing *dool*, [= woe.]  
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,  
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,  
That weekly this aréa throng,  
Oh, pass not by!  
But, with a frater-feeling strong,  
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear,  
Can others teach the course to steer,  
Yet runs himself life's mad career,  
Wild as the wave;  
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,  
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below  
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,  
And keenly felt the friendly glow,  
And softer flame;  
But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
And stained his name!

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Reader, attend—whether thy soul  
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,  
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,  
In low pursuit;  
Know, prudent, cautious self-control  
Is wisdom's root.

But the departure of his ship was delayed from day to day. His fame had spread. The milkmaids of Ayrshire were beginning to abstain from buying new ribbons and the ploughboys to wear "auld breeks," in order to own his poems. They were becoming known, too, in other circles. It happened that Prof. Dougald Stewart, a distinguished Edinburgh metaphysician, was visiting that summer at Catrine, a few miles from Burns's farm. Burns's book fell into his hands. He mentioned it in terms of warm praise to Dr. McKenzie of Mauchline, who was a friend of the poet's. The result was a dinner, at which the professor, the physician, the poet, and Lord Daer were present. Burns's impressions of the latter, the first lord he had ever met, are recorded in the following lines;

This wot ye all whom it concerns:  
I, Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,  
October twenty-third,  
A ne'er to-be-forgotten day,  
So far I *sprackl'd* up the braise, [=scrambled]  
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.

\* \* \* \* \*

I watched the symptoms o' the great,  
The gentle pride, the lordly state,  
The arrogant assuming;  
The fient a pride, nae pride had he,  
Nor sauce, nor state, that I could see,  
Mair than an honest ploughman.

Then from his Lordship I shall learn,  
Henceforth to meet with unconcern  
One rank as weel's another;

## ROBERT BURNS

Nae honest worthy man may care  
To meet with noble, youthful Daer,  
For he but meets a brother.

As a result of the volume, too, he made the acquaintance of Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop, who claimed to be a direct descendant of Sir William Wallace. With her he began a correspondence that ended only with his death. Their acquaintance sprang from Mrs. Dunlop's admiration for the Cotter's Saturday Night, which she met with when he was suffering from the depression caused by a long and painful illness. She was so stirred and delighted with the poem, that she at once sent a messenger to Mossgiel, some fifteen miles distant, with a letter expressing her admiration and an order for a half dozen copies of the Kilmarnock edition.

In September, Burns had received a most encouraging letter from Dr. Blacklock, the blind poet of Edinburgh. Early in November an appreciative review of his poems appeared in the Edinburgh Magazine. In spite of this success, his printer at Kilmarnock refused to risk a second edition. Actuated by all these events, no doubt, the poet decided, about November 20, to abandon his American project and to go to Edinburgh, his purpose being to find a new publisher. His progress thither was a sort of triumphal march. From farm to farm he was heralded and fettered. He entered Edinburgh on November 28.

He had no letters of introduction. For a few days he wandered about from Holyrood to the Castle. He found the house where Ramsay had lived and knelt at the grave of Fergusson. Then came a change. A friend introduced him to Lord Glencairn, a gentleman whose intellect, Burns said afterward, was so admirable that it in itself was an argument for the immortality of the soul. When Glencairn died, some five years later, Burns wrote of him as follows:

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

“The bridegroom may forget the bride  
Was made his wedded wife yestreen;  
The monarch may forget the crown  
That on his head an hour has been;  
The mother may forget the child  
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;  
But I’ll remember thee, Glencairn,  
And a’ that thou hast done for me.”

By Glencairn Burns was introduced to Creech, the leading publisher of the day. Within a fortnight of his arrival, there appeared in the *Lounger* a review of his poems from the pen of Henry Mackenzie, author of the *Man of Feeling*, in which he was hailed as one of the great poets of the world. On December 20 the attention of Edinburgh was still more forcibly called to his existence by the publication in the *Caledonian Mercury* of an Address to a Haggis.

## ADDRESS TO A HAGGIS! 1

Fair fa' your honest, *sonsie* face, [ = plump ]  
Great chieftain o' the puddin'-race:  
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,  
*Painch*, tripe, or *thairm* [ = paunch;  
= gut ]  
Weel are ye *wordy* of a grace [ = worthy ]  
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,  
Your *hurdies* like a distant hill; [ = hips ]  
Your pin <sup>2</sup> wad help to mend a mill  
In time o' need,  
While through your pores the dewes distil  
Like amber bead.

1. Haggis = a pudding boiled in the stomach of a sheep. It is not altogether unlike the "stuffin" that comes with turkey at an American Thanksgiving dinner. It is delicious.

2. Pin used to fasten the opening in the bag.

## ADDRESS TO A HAGGIS

His knife see rustic labor dight,  
And cut you up wi' ready slight,  
Trenching your gushing entrails bright  
Like ony ditch;  
And then, oh, what a glorious sight,  
Warm-reekin', rich!

Then horn for *horn* they stretch and strive,  
[ = horn spoon]  
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,  
Till a' their weel-swallow'd kytes<sup>3</sup> *belyve* [ = shortly]  
Are bent like drums;  
Then auld guidman, maist like to rive,  
"Bethankit!" hums.

Is there that owre his French ragout,  
Or olio that wad *staw* a sow, [ = disgust]  
Or fricassee wad mak her spew  
Wi' perfect sconner,  
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view  
On sic a dinner!

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,  
As *feckless* as a withered *rash*, [ = feeble;  
His spindle-shank a guid whip-lash, [ = rush]  
His *nieve* a *nit*; [ = fist; = nut]  
Through bloody flood or field to dash,  
Oh, how unfit!

But mark the rustic, haggis-fed;  
The trembling earth resounds his tread;  
Clap in his *walie* *nieve* a blade, [ = powerful]  
He'll mak it whistle;  
And legs, and arms, and heads will *sned*,  
[ = slice off]  
Like *taps* o' thrissle. [ = tops]

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3. Weel-swallow'd kytes = well swollen stomachs.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Ye powers wha mak mankind your care,  
And dish them out their bill o' fare,  
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware  
That jaups in luggies;<sup>4</sup>  
But, if ye wish her gratefu' prayer,  
Gie her a Haggis!

Soon Burns found himself the lion of the hour. The brilliant Henry Erskine, who had called Dr. Johnson a bear to that surly gentleman's face; Dr. Adam Smith, author of the *Wealth of Nations* and founder of the science of political economy; Dr. Hugh Blair, who wrote rhetoric; Lord Monboddo, who anticipated Darwin's monkey theory, but whose philosophy was less admired by Burns than was his daughter; Robertson, the historian; Mackenzie; Dougald Stewart—all asked him hither and thither. The beautiful Duchess of Gordon, then the reigning belle, was attentive to him. Young Francis Jeffrey, full of wonder, stared at him in the street. Young Walter Scott met him at a dinner party; remembered the source of a quotation which everybody else present had forgotten; was rewarded with a smile and a kind word from Burns; and ever afterward remembered his great black eyes. Through it all, the poet never lost his head and steadfastly kept before his mind the consciousness of the fact that his fine holiday was after all only a holiday. In fact, it is probable that he was more or less bored at times by patrician manners and stung by patrician condescension. It is whispered that he was glad to escape from the society of the great to taverns where the fun was faster and more furious and where he was himself acknowledged as sole master of the revels. Certainly no one in Edinburgh formed a juster estimate of Burns's powers than Burns himself. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, rather contemptuously perhaps, that he was in a fair way to become as eminent as Thomas à Kempis or John Bunyan. With the intellectual powers of the Edinburgh literati he was not much impressed. He

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4. Auld Scotland wants no thin stuff that splashes in wooden dishes with handles.



## EPISTLE TO MRS. SCOTT

thought that he had found as much mental capacity—in the rough—in Tarbolton debating societies and Mauchline Masonic gatherings. When asked if he had profited by the criticisms of his learned friends, he said: “These gentlemen remind me of some spinsters in my country, who spin their thread so fine, that it is neither fit for weft nor woof.” He admitted, however, that Edinburgh had given him one new experience—the friendship of a refined and accomplished woman.

### 1787 (Twenty-eight)

During all this winter he lived with a poor Ayrshire lad in a garret for which they paid three shillings a week. In February we find him erecting at his own expense a stone to the memory of Fergusson and causing the following inscription to be inscribed upon it:

Here lies Robt. Fergusson, Poet.

Born, September 5th., 1751—Died 16th. September, 1774.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,

“No storied urn nor animated bust;”

This simple stone directs pale Scotia’s way

To pour her sorrows o’er her poet’s dust.

By special grant of the Managers to Robert Burns, who erected this Stone, this burial place is to remain forever sacred to the memory of Robert Fergusson.

A little later he was sending some lines of autobiographic interest to Mrs. Scott of Wauchope, who had offered in very fair Scotch verse to give him a plaid.

## EPISTLE TO MRS. SCOTT.

*Gudewife of Wauchope House, Roxburghshire.*

I mind it weel, in early date,

When I was beardless, young, and blate,

An’ first could thresh the barn,

Or haud a yokin at the pleugh;

An’ tho’ forfoughten sair eneugh,

[ = turn ]

[ = tired ]



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Yet unco proud to learn:  
 When first amang the yellow corn  
 A man I reckon'd was,  
 An' with the lave ilk merry morn  
 Could rank my rig an' lass,  
 Still shearing and clearing  
 The tither stooked raw,  
 Wi' *claivers*, an' *haivers*, [ = gossip;  
 Wearing the day awa. = nonsense]

E'en then, a wish, (I mind its pow'r),  
 A wish that to my latest hour  
 Shall strongly heave my breast,  
 That I for poor auld Scotland's sake  
 Some usefu' plan or book could make,  
 Or sing a sang at least.  
 The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide  
 Amang the bearded *bear*, [ = barley]  
 I turn'd the weeder-clips aside  
 And spar'd the symbol dear:  
 No nation, no station,  
 My envy e'er could raise;  
 A Scot still, *but* blot still, [ = without]  
 I knew nae higher praise.

But still the elements o' sang,  
 In formless jumble, right an' wrang,  
 Wild floated in my brain;  
 Till on that *hairst* I said before, [ = harvest]  
 My partner, in the merry core,  
 She rous'd the forming strain;  
 I see her yet, the *sonsie* quean, [ = charming]  
 That lighted up my jingle,  
 Her witching smile, her *pawky* een [ = rougish]  
 That gart my heart-strings tingle.

In the meantime the printing of his second volume was far advanced. On February 24, he wrote to John Ballantyne: "I am getting my phiz done by an eminent engraver

## EPISTLE TO MRS. SCOTT

(Beugo), and if it can be ready in time I will appear in my book, looking like all other fools to my title-page." The volume appeared April 21. Three thousand copies were struck off. Through the interest of Lord Glencairn the entire Caledonian Hunt put down their names as subscribers. One nobleman took 42 copies and another 40. The list of subscribers covered 38 pages. No such patronage had been given to literary effort since the days of Pope. Burns's profits amounted to about 500 pounds.

The first use which he made of his newly acquired wealth was to relieve his brother Gilbert, who was still struggling on the farm at Mossgiel. To him he sent 180 pounds. The next was to travel. On May 5, he started with Mr. Robt. Ainslie on a tour of the Border, which was calling him with a hundred tongues of tradition. Among other places they visited Melrose, Dryburgh, and Yarrow. Crossing into England to take a look at Hexham and Carlisle, for the first and only time in his life Burns set foot on foreign soil. All the way he kept making epigrams and falling in love with barmaids. On their return the friends passed through Dumfries. On June 9 they arrived at Mauchline.

Burns was received by his family with emotions which is easy to imagine but impossible to describe. It is related that when his mother caught sight of him all she could say was: "O Robbie!" By the people at large he was treated with much deference. Jean Armour smiled upon him again and even Adam Armour was gracious. Remembering how he had been ill-treated when poor and unknown by these same people, he was now filled with disgust at their servility. To his friend Nicol he wrote that his reception at Mauchline had so filled him with contempt for mankind that he had bought a pocket edition of *Paradise Lost* in order to study the character of Satan, with whose hatred of humanity he felt a keen sympathy.

Late in June he made a short tour in the Highlands, visiting Loch Lomond and Dumbarton. On August 25, he set out from Edinburgh with William Nicol, master in the high school, on a northern tour. They visited Ban-

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

nockburn, Stirling, Blair, Inverness, Aberdeen, and Montrose, returning to Edinburgh September 16. The visit at Blair, where they were entertained for two days by the Duke of Athole, Burns referred to as one of the happiest occasions of his life. At their departure the Duke advised them to turn aside to look at Bruar Water. The result was the following poem:

### THE HUMBLE PETITION OF BRUAR WATERS TO THE NOBLE DUKE OF ATHOLE.

My lord, I know your noble ear  
Woe ne'er assails in vain;  
Emboldened thus, I beg you'll hear  
Your humble slave complain,  
How saucy Phoebus' scorching beams,  
In flaming summer-pride,  
Dry-withering, waste my foamy streams,  
And drink my crystal tide.

The lightly-jumpin' glow'rin' trouts,  
That through my waters play,  
If, in their random, wanton spouts,  
They near the margin stray;  
If, hapless chance! they linger lang,  
I'm scorching up so shallow,  
They're left the whitening stanes amang,  
In gasping death to wallow.

Last day I *grat* wi' spite and *teen*,      [= wept  
As poet Burns came by,      = vexation  
That to a bard I should be seen  
Wi' half my channel dry:  
A panegyric rhyme, I ween,  
Even as I was he *shored* me;      [= assured  
But had I in my glory been,  
He, kneeling, wad adored me.

## PETITION OF BRUAR WATER

Here, foaming down the shelvy rocks,  
In twisting strength I *rin*; [= run]  
There, high my boiling torrent smokes,  
Wild roaring o'er a *linn*; [= waterfall]  
Enjoying large each spring and well,  
As nature gave them me,  
I am, although I say't mysel,  
Worth gaun a mile to see.

Would then my noble master please  
To grant my highest wishes,  
He'll shade my banks wi' towering trees,  
And bonny spreading bushes.  
Delighted doubly then, my lord,  
You'll wander on my banks,  
And listen monie a grateful bird  
Return you tuneful thanks.

The sober *laverock*, warbling wild, [= lark]  
Shall to the skies aspire;  
The *gowdspink*, Music's gayest child, [= gold-  
Shall sweetly join the choir: finch]  
The blackbird strong, the *lintwhite* clear,  
[= linnet]  
The *mavis* mild and mellow, [= thrush]  
The robin pensive autumn cheer,  
In all her locks of yellow.

This, too, a covert shall insure  
To shield them from the storm;  
And coward *maukin* sleep secure, [= hare]  
Low in her grassy form.  
Here shall the shepherd make his seat,  
To weave his crown of flowers;  
Or find a sheltering safe retreat  
From prone descending showers.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

And here, by sweet endearing stealth,  
    Shall meet the loving pair,  
Despising worlds with all their wealth  
    As empty idle care.  
The flowers shall vie in all their charms  
    The hour of heaven to grace,  
And birks extend their fragrant arms  
    To screen the dear embrace.

Here haply too, at vernal dawn,  
    Some musing bard may stray,  
And eye the smoking, dewy lawn,  
    And misty mountain gray;  
Or by the reaper's nightly beam,  
    Mild-chequering through the trees,  
Rave to my darkly dashing stream,  
    Hoarse swelling on the breeze.

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,  
    My lowly banks o'erspread,  
And view, deep bending in the pool,  
    Their shadows' watery bed!  
Let fragrant birks in woodbines drest  
    My craggy cliffs adorn;  
And, for the little songster's nest,  
    The close embowering thorn.

So may old Scotia's darling hope,  
    Your little angel band,  
Spring, like their fathers, up to prop  
    Their honored native land!  
So may, through *Albion's* farthest ken,  
[= England]  
    To social-flowing glasses,  
The grace be — "Athole's honest men,  
    And Athole's bonny lasses!"

In accordance with the poet's suggestion, the Duke caused trees to be planted along the banks of the stream.

## AE FOND KISS

On a portion of their journey they had for guide a boy who long afterward gave some reminiscences of their conversation. Nicol asked him if he had read Burns's poems and which of them he liked best. The boy replied: "I was much entertained with the Twa Dogs, but I like best the Cotter's Saturday Night, although it made me greet when my father had me to read it to my mother." Burns, with a sudden start, looked at the youth's face intently, and patting his shoulder said: "Well, my callant, I don't wonder at your greeting at reading the poem; it made me greet more than once when I was writing it."

In December the poet started an epistolary flirtation with a young widow named Mrs. McLelrose. Long letters full of extravagant protestations of undying affection were exchanged, the bard signing himself Sylvander and the lady calling herself Clarinda. The most important result of the acquaintance was the song, *Ae Fond Kiss*, composed three years later. Scott is said to have remarked that the third stanza contains the essence of a thousand love songs.

### AE FOND KISS.

TUNE—*Rory's Dal's Port.*

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;  
Ae fareweel, and then for ever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.  
Who shall say that fortune grieves him  
While the star of hope she leaves him?  
Me, nae chereful twinkle lights me;  
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame your partial fancy;  
Naething could resist my Nancy:  
But to see her was to love her,  
Love but her and love forever.  
Had we never lov'd sae kindly,  
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Fare-thee-weel, thou first and fairest!  
Fare-thee-weel, thou best and dearest!  
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,  
Peace, Enjoyment, Love, and Pleasure!  
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!  
Ae fareweel, alas, for ever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Waning sighs and groans I'll wage thee.

Some time during the same month, through the efforts of friends, Burns's name was enrolled on the waiting list of excise officers. Throughout the winter he was busy with the composition of songs for a national collection called the Scots' Musical Museum, which had been undertaken by James Johnson.

### 1788 (Twenty-nine)

Early in the year he went to Dumfries to inspect a farm. He stopped at Mossgiel February 23, and visited Jean Armour. In March he returned to Edinburgh and on March 13 leased the farm of Ellisland on the River Nith a few miles above Dumfries. On seeing it for the first time, one of his friends cried: "Mr. Burns, you have made a poet's, not a farmer's choice." Late in April he was married to Jean Armour. In June he went to live at Ellisland, Mrs. Burns remaining at Mauchline until a new house could be built upon the farm. In the construction of this house the poet assisted with his own hands; one of his workman said: "He beat us a' for a dour lift." While he was thus separated from his wife he wrote in her honor the lines:

### I LOVE MY JEAN.

TUNE—*Miss Admiral Gordon's Strathspey.*

Of a' the *airts* the wind can blaw [= directions]  
I dearly like the west,  
For there the bonny lassie lives,  
The lassie I lo'e best:



## O WERE I ON PARNASSUS HILL

There's wild woods grow, and rivers *row*, [=roll]  
And monie a hill between;  
But day and night my fancy's flight  
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
I hear her sweet and fair;  
I see her in the tunefu' birds,  
I hear her charm the air:

There's not a bonny flower that springs  
By fountain, *shaw*, or green, [=grove]  
There's not a bonny bird that sings,  
But minds me o' my Jean.

In December he conducted Mrs. Burns to the new home, marking the occasion with the "saucy little song,"  
I hae a Wife o' my Ain.

I'll be merry and free,  
I'll be sad for naebody;  
Naebody cares for me,  
I care for naebody.

His happy love for her is still further attested in the following lines:

### SONG—O WERE I ON PARNASSUS HILL.

TUNE—*My love is lost to me.*

O were I on Parnassus hill,  
Or had o' Helicon my fill,  
That I might catch poetic skill  
To sing how dear I love thee!  
But Nith maun be my Muse's rill,  
My Muse maun be they bonie sel',  
On Corsicon I'll glow'r and spell,  
And write how dear I love thee.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Then come, sweet Muse, inspire my lay!  
For a' the lee-lang simmer's day  
I couldna sing, I couldna say,  
How much, how dear, I love thee.  
I see thee dancing on the green,  
Thy waist sae *jimp*, thy limbs sae *clean*,  
[=slender; =shapely]  
Thy tempting lips, thy rougish een, —  
By heaven and Earth I love thee.

By night, by day, afield, at hame,  
The thoughts o' thee my breast inflame:  
And aye I muse and sing thy name—  
    I only live to love thee.  
Tho' I were doom'd to wander on  
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,  
Till my last weary sand was run;  
    Till then—and then I love thee!

These were, indeed, happy days for Burns. His pen was busy with new songs for Johnson's Museum. The farmers and well-to-do people of the neighborhood welcomed him heartily to Nithsdale. The peasants regarded him with admiration not unmixed with dread on account of his powers of sarcasm; once, at a wedding, two young fellows quarreled and were about to fight, when Burns rose up and said: "Sit down, or else I'll hang you up like potato-bogles in sang to-morrow." They sat down as if their noses were bleeding. He interested himself soon in plans for the public good; among other things he started a parish library. On Sunday evenings he conducted family worship. He had true friends. His wife adored him. She had a fine voice and sang his songs for him. "His passionate and wayward heart," it has been well said, "was at rest in its own happiness. He could see the grain yellowing in his own fields; he had the excise commission in his pocket as a recourse in case of trouble; and on the red scar above the river he could stride about, giving

## AULD LANG SYNE

audience to incommunicable thought, while the Nith was  
hoarse with flood, and the moon was wading through  
clouds overhead."

Toward the close of the year he composed Auld  
Lang Syne:

### AULD LANG SYNE.

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to min'?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And days o' *lang syne*? [ = long ago]

#### CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne,  
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet  
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the *braes*, [ = hills]  
And pu'd the *gowans* fine; [ = daisies]  
But we've wandered monie a weary foot,  
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae *paidl't i' the burn*, [ = paddled;  
= brook]  
Frae morning sun till *dine*; [ = dinner]  
But seas between us *braid* hae roared,  
Sin' auld lang syne. [ = broad]

And here's a hand, my trusty *fiere*, [ = friend]  
And gie's a hand o' thine;  
And we'll tak a right guid *willie-waught*,  
For auld lang syne. [ = draught]

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

And surely you'll *be* your pint-stoup,  
And surely I'll be mine; [= stand]  
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet  
For auld lang syne.

### 1789 (Thirty)

The coming of January was signalized by a happy  
elegy on the year 1788.

### ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788.

For Lords or Kings I dinna mourn,  
E'en let them die—for that they're born;  
But oh! prodigious to reflec'!  
A *toumont*, sirs, is gane to wreck! [twelvemonth]  
O Eighty-eight, in thy sma' space  
What dire events hae taken place!  
Of what enjoyments thou hast reft us!  
In what a pickle thou hast left us!

The Spanish empire's *tint* a head, [= lost]  
And my auld teethless *Bawtie's* dead; [= a dog]  
The *tulzie's* sair 'tween Pitt and Fox, [= contention]  
And our guidwife's wee birdie cocks:  
The tane is game, a bluidie devil,  
But to the hen-birds unco civil;  
The tither's something *dour* o' treadin',  
[= backward]

But better stuff ne'er clawed a *midden*. [= dung-  
hill]

Ye ministers, come mount the *poupit*, [pulpit]  
And cry till ye be *hearse* and *roupet*, [= hoarse;  
= husky]

For Eighty-eight he wished you weel,  
And gied you a' baith gear and meal;  
E'en monie a *plack*, and monie a peck, [= coin]  
Ye ken yoursels for little *feck!* . . . [= worth]

## ELEGY ON THE YEAR 1788

Observe the very *nowte* and sheep, [ = cattle]  
How *dowf* and *dowilie* they creep: [ = downcast;  
= spiritless]

Nay, even the yirth itsel does cry,  
For Embro' wells are *grutten* dry. [ = wept]

O Eighty-nine, thou's but a bairn,  
And no owre auld, I hope, to learn!  
Thou beardless boy, I pray tak care,  
Thou now has got thy daddy's chair,  
Nae hand-cuffed, muzzled, hap-shackled Regent,  
But like himsel, a full free agent.  
Be sure ye follow out the plan  
Nae waur than he did, honest man!  
As muckle better as you can.

On May 4, he wrote Alexander Cunningham as follows:  
One morning lately, as I was out pretty early in the fields  
sowing some grass-seeds, I heard the burst of a shot from  
a neighboring plantation and presently a poor little  
wounded hare came hirlping by me. You will guess my  
indignation at the inhuman fellow who could shoot a hare  
at this season, when all of them have young ones. Indeed  
there is something in the business of destroying for our  
sport, individuals that do not injure us materially, which  
could never reconcile to my ideas of virtue." Burns  
threatened to throw the offender, who was the son of a  
neighboring farmer, into the Nith; but finally found  
another vent for his feelings in these lines:

Inhuman man! curse on thy barbarous art,  
And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye!  
May never pity soothe thee with a sigh,  
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go, live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,  
The bitter little that of life remains:  
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains  
To thee shall home, or food, or pastime yield.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,  
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!  
The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,  
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Perhaps a mother's anguish adds its woe;  
The playful pair crowd fondly to thy side;  
Ah! helpless nurslings, who will now provide  
The life a mother only can bestow!

Oft as by winding Nith, I, musing, wait  
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,  
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,  
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hap-  
less fate.

A little later he sent to Johnson's Museum what is probably the finest expression ever written of that conjugal love which has outlived youth and maturity and has only grown stronger with the years that have taken all things else away. Somebody has said that John Anderson is a picture of the poet's parents.

### JOHN ANDERSON.

TUNE—*John Anderson my Jo.*

John Anderson, my *jo*, John, [=sweetheart]  
When we were first *acquaint*, [=acquainted]  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonny brow was *brent*; =smooth]  
But now your brow is *beld*, John, [=bald]  
Your locks are like the snaw;  
But blessings on your frosty *pow*, [=head]  
John Anderson, my *jo*.

John Anderson, my *jo*, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither,  
And monie a *cantie* day, John, [=pleasant]  
We've had wi' ane anither:

## TAM GLEN

Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my jo.

Almost at the same time he composed the rollicking  
Tam Glen:

### TAM GLEN.

My heart is a-breaking, dear *tittie*;      [= sister]  
Some counsel unto me come len';  
To anger them a' is a pity,  
But what will I do wi' Tam glen?

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw fellow,  
In *poortith* I might mak a *fen*;      [= poverty;  
What care I in riches to wallow,      = shift]  
If I mauna marry Tam Glen?

There's Lowrie the Laird of Drumeller —  
"Gude day to your, brute!" he comes ben:  
He brags and he blows o' his siller,  
But when will he dance like Tam Glen!

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            \*

Come counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry;  
I'll gie ye my bonny black hen,  
Gif ye will advise me to marry  
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

During the summer he met a fat antiquary, Capt.  
rose, with whom he soon became unco "pack and thick,"  
and to whom he addressed some excellent lines:



ON THE LATE CAPT. GROSE'S

*Peregrinations through Scotland, collecting  
the antiquities of that kingdom.*

Hear, land o' Cakes, and brither Scots,  
Frae Maidenkirk to Johnny Groat's;<sup>1</sup>—  
If there's a hole in a' your coats,

I *rede* you *tent* it: [=advise; =fix]  
A *chield's* amang you takin notes, [=fellow]  
And faith he'll *prent* it. [=print]

If in your bounds you chance to light  
Upon a fine, fat, *fodgel* wight, [=plump]  
Of stature short, but genius bright,  
That's he, mark weel;  
And wow! he has an unco *sleight* [=skill]  
O' *cauk* and *keel*. [=white and red chalk]

By some auld, houlet-haunted *biggin*, [=building]  
Or kirk deserted by its *riggin*, [=roof]  
It's ten to one you'll find him snug in  
Some *eldritch* part, [=haunted]  
Wi' deils, they say, Lord save's! colleaguin  
At some black art.

\* \* \* \* \*

It's tauld he was a sodger bred,  
And ane wad rather *fa'n* then fled; [=fallen]  
But now he's *quat* the *spurtle-blade*, [=quit;  
And dog-skin wallet, =sword]  
And ta'en the antiquarian trade,  
I think they call it.

1. Kirksmaiden, in Wigtonshire, is the most southerly parish  
in Scotland, and Johnie Groat's, in Caithness, the most northerly.

## 2

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## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

\* \* \* \* \*

“To make a happy fireside clime  
To weans and wife,  
That's the true pathos and sublime  
Of human life.”

In connection with his duties as exciseman he was compelled to ride about 200 miles a week. This ultimately, added as it was to his farm work, proved too much for his constitution and interfered with his poetical labors. At first, however, he got on well enough. As he rode about the country he composed his songs and his kind heartedness in the discharge of his duties preserved him from the unpopularity usually experienced by men of his occupation. Several pleasant stories are told concerning his method of tempering justice with mercy. One day at a fair, for instance, he was seen to call upon a poor woman who for the day was doing a little illicit business in liquor. A nod brought her to the door. “Kate,” said he, “are you mad? Don't you know that the supervisor and I will be in upon you in forty minutes?”

### 1790 (Thirty-one)

The appointment to the excise came none too soon. On January 11 the poet wrote Gilbert Burns that his farm was a ruinous affair. To another friend he had written shortly before: “My poor distracted mind is so torn, so jaded, so racked and bedevilled with the task of the superlatively damned, to make one guinea do the business of three, that I detest, abhor, and swoon at the very word business.” His health, meanwhile, was failing. Too much work and too much hospitality were beginning to undermine even his iron frame. His great reputation caused doors everywhere to open for his entertainment as he rode about the country on his excise duties; and to all

## TAM O' SHANTER

this there could be only one result in the end. His poetical activity, too, was lessened by his pleasures as well as his troubles.

The year, however, was signalized by the composition of Tam O'Shanter. Gilbert Burns tells how it came to be written. The poet and Captain Grose visited Ayr together, and Burns requested the Antiquary to draw for him a picture of Galloway's auld haunted kirk, in which he was particularly interested because it was there that William Burness was buried. Grose consented on condition that Burns furnish a story to be published along with his picture. Burns agreed and one day in August, when he was in the mood and his "barmy noodle was working prime," wandered forth along the banks of the Nith. There he remained during most of the day, and there in the afternoon he was found by Mrs. Burns, busily engaged crooning to himself. Perceiving that she was not wanted she wandered on until her attention was arrested by the strange exticulations of the bard. He was reciting very loud the verses which he had just conceived. "I wish ye had seen him," said his wife. "He was in such ecstasy that his tears were happing down his cheeks." Having written the lines out on the top of his sod-dyke above the water, Burns came into the house and read them in high glee at the fireside. The poem was thus the work of a single day—the best single day's work that has been done in Scotland since Bannockburn," says somebody. Burns himself considered it the finest product of his genius. Andrew Lang thinks it entitles him to rank with Chaucer as a story teller.

## TAM O' SHANTER.

### A TALE

"Of brownyis and of bogilis full is this buke."

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

When chapman billies<sup>1</sup> leave the street,  
And *drouthy* neebors, neebors meet, [=thirsty]

1. Chapman billies=merchant comrades. Chapman (German *kaufman*) is akin to the verb *cheapen*.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

As market-days are wearing late,  
 And folk begin to *tak the gate*; [= take the road]  
 While we sit bousing at the *nappy*, [= ale]  
 And gettin' fou and unco happy,  
 We think na on the lang Scots miles  
 The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,<sup>2</sup>  
 That lie between us and our hame,  
 Where sits our sulky sullen dame,  
 Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
 Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.<sup>3</sup>

This truth fand honest Tam o' Shanter,  
 As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,  
 (Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses  
 For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,  
 As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's advice!  
 She tauld thee weel thou wast a *skellum*,  
 [= loafer]  
 A blethering blustering, drunken *blellum*;  
 [= windbag]

That frae November till October,  
 Ae market-day thou wasna sober;  
 That ilka *melder*, wi' the miller, [= grinding]  
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;  
 That every naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;  
 That at the Lord's house, even on Sunday,  
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton<sup>4</sup> Jean till Monday.  
 She prophesied that, late or soon,  
 Thou would be found deep drowned in Doon,  
 Or caught wi' warlocks<sup>5</sup> in the *mirk*, [= dark]  
 By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

2. Mosses, waters, slaps, and styles=swamps, ponds, hedge openings, stairs over fences.

3. "The finger goes at once upon the last line. Burns knows the sex. Most wives are too good, sweet, tender, and self-sacrificing to do more than make believe when they rebuke." *Andrew Carnegie*.

4. Any little village with a parish church is called Kirkton.

5. Warlocks=masculine of witches.

## TAM O' SHANTER

Ah, gentle dames! it *gars* me *greet*, [=makes;  
=weep]

To think how monie counsels sweet,  
How monie lengthened sage advices,  
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale:—Ae market-night,  
Tam had got planted unco right,  
Fast by an ingle, *bleezing* finely, [=blazing]  
Wi' *reaming swats*, that drank divinely;  
[=foaming ale]

And at his elbow, *Souter* Johnny, [=shoe-  
maker]

His ancient, trusty, *drouthy* crony; [=thirsty]  
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither—  
They had been fou for weeks thegither!  
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,  
And aye the ale was growing better;  
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious;  
The souter tauld his queerest stories,  
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus;  
The storm without might *rair* and rustle—  
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle. [=roar]

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drowned himself amang the nappy!  
As bees flee hame wi' *lades* o' treasure, [=loads]  
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure:  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious.

But pleasures are like poppies spread,—  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snowfall in the river,—  
A moment white—then melts forever;  
Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place;



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Or like the rainbow's lovely form,  
Evanishing amid the storm.  
Nae man can tether time or tide;  
The hour approaches Tam maun ride:  
That hour, o' night's black arch the keystone  
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;  
And sic a night he tak's the road in  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 't wad blawn its last;  
The rattling showers rose<sup>7</sup> on the blast;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed;  
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed:  
That night, a child might understand,  
The Deil had business on his hand.  
Weel mounted on his gray mare, Meg,  
(A better never lifted leg,)  
Tam *skelpit* on through *dub* and mire,  
[ = hurried; = pools  
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;  
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet  
Whiles glowering round wi' prudent cares,  
Lest *bogles* catch him unawares:— [ = goblins  
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Where ghaists and *houlets* nightly cry. [ = owls

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Where in the snaw the chapman *smooored*;  
[ = smothered  
And past the *birks* and *meikle* stane,  
[ = birches; = big  
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;

---

6. What hour? Get the picture. Look at the upper half of clock's face and remember that in August the sun does not set in Scotland until about 9 P. M.

7. Note the force of the word "rose."

8. Note the comparison implied in the word "swallowed."



## TAM O' SHANTER

And through the *whins*, and by the cairn,  
[=furze]  
Where hunters fand the murdered bairn;  
And near the thorn, *aboon* the well, [=above]  
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersel'.  
Before him Doon pours all his floods;  
The doubling storm roars through the woods;  
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;  
Near and more near the thunders roll;  
When, glimmering through the groaning trees,  
Kirk-Alloway seemed in a *bleeze*. [=blaze]  
Through ilka bore the beams were glancing,  
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn,  
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!  
Wi' *tippenny*, we fear nae evil; [=ale]  
Wi' *usquebae*, we'll face the devil!— [=whiskey]  
The swats sae *reamed* in Tammie's noddle,  
[=foamed]  
Fair play; he cared na deils a *boddle*. [=cent]  
But Maggie stood right sair astonished,  
Till, by the heel and hand admonished,  
She ventured forward on the light;  
And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!  
Warlocks and witches in a dance;  
Nae cotillion *brent* frae France, [=brand]  
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,  
Put life and mettle in their heels.  
A *winnock-bunker* in the east, [=window-seat]  
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;  
A *towzie tyke*, black, grim, and large,  
[=shaggy dog]  
To gie them music was his charge;  
He screwed the pipes and *gart* them skirl,  
[=made]  
Till roof and rafters a' did *dirl*. [=shake]  
Coffins stood round, like open presses,  
That shawed the dead in their last dresses;

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

And by some devilish *cantrip* slight      [= magic]  
 Each in its cauld hand held a light:  
 By which heroic Tam was able  
 To note upon the haly table,  
 A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;  
 Twa span-lang, wee unchristened *bairns*      [= children]  
 A thief, new-cutted frae the *rape*,      [= rope]  
 Wi' his last gasp his *gab* did gape;      [= mouth]  
 Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;  
 Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;  
 A garter which a babe had strangled;  
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,  
 Whom his ain son o' life bereft, —  
 The gray hairs yet *stack* to the heft:      [= stuck]  
 Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
 Which even to name wad be unlawfu'!

As Tammie glow'red, amazed and curious,  
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:  
 The piper loud and louder blew;  
 The dancers quick and quicker flew;  
 They reeled, they set, they crossed, they *cleekit*,  
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit <sup>9</sup>!      [= linked]  
 And *coost* her *duddies* to the wark,      [= cast]  
 And linket at it in her *sark*!      = clothes  
[= petticoat]

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,  
 A' plump and strappin' in their teens;  
 Their sarks, instead o' *creeshie* flannen, [= greasy]  
 Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder linen! <sup>10</sup>  
 Thir *breeks* o' mine, my only pair,      [= breeches]  
 That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,  
 I wad hae gi'en them off my *hurdies*,      [= hips]  
 For ae blink o' the bonny burdies!

---

9. Till each old woman sweat and steamed.

10. Very fine linen, woven in a loom of 1,700 divisions.

## TAM O' SHANTER

But withered beldams, auld and droll,  
 Rigwooddie hags wad spean a foal,<sup>11</sup>  
 Louping and flinging on a cummock,<sup>12</sup>  
 I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But Tam kenned what was what fu' brawlie:  
 There was ae winsome wench and *walie*,  
[=attractive]  
 That night enlisted in the *core*, [=chorus]  
 (Lang after kenned on Carrick shore;  
 For monie a beast to dead she shot,  
 And *perished* monie a bonny boat, [=destroyed]  
 And shook baith meikle corn and *bear*, [=barley]  
 And kept the country-side in fear).  
 Her *cutty-sark*, o' Paisley *harn*, [=short dress;  
=linen]

That while a lassie she had worn,  
 In longitude though sorely scanty,  
 It was her best, and she was vauntie.  
 Ah! little kenned thy reverend grannie  
 That sark she *coft* for her wee Nannie, [=bought]  
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('t was a' her riches),  
 Wad ever graced a dance o' witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour;  
 Sic flights are far beyond her power;—  
 To sing how Nannie *lap* and *flang* [=leapt;  
 (A souple jade she was, and strang); =flung]  
 And how Tam stood like ane bewitched,  
 And thought his very e'en enriched;  
 Even Satan glow'ed and fidget fu' fain,  
 And *hotched* and blew wi' might and main:  
[=hitched]  
 Till first ae caper, *syne* anither, [=then]  
 Tam *tint* his reason a' thegither, [=lost]  
 And roars out: "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"  
 And in an instant all was dark:

---

11. Rigwooddie hags = hags so dry that they would wean a foal.

12. Leaping and dancing on a stick.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
 When out the hellish legion sallied.  
 As bees bizz out wi' angry *fye*, [= fuss]  
 When plundering herds assail their *byke*; [= hive]  
 As open *poussie*'s mortal foes, [= hare]  
 When, pop! she starts before their nose;  
 As eager runs the market-crowd,  
 When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;  
 So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
 Wi' monie an *eldritch* screech and hollow.  
 [= unearthly]

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy *fairin'*!  
 [= deserts]  
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!  
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin';  
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!  
 Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
 And win the keystone o' the brig;<sup>13</sup>  
 There at them thou thy tail may toss,  
 A running-stream they darena cross!  
 But ere the keystone she could make,  
 The *fient* a tail she had to shake! [= devil]

For Nannie, far before the rest,  
 Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
 And flew at Tam wi' furious *ettle*, — [= attempt]  
 But little *wist* she Maggie's mettle! [= knew]  
 Ae spring brought off her master *hale*, [= whole]  
 But left behind her ain gray tail:  
 The *carlin* claut her by the rump, [= witch]  
 And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

---

13. "It is a well-known fact that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any further than the middle of the next running-stream. It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller that, when he falls in with *bogles*, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back."—This note to the poem was supplied by Burns himself.

## BONNIE DOON

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed!  
Whene'er to drink you are inclined,  
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,  
Think ye may buy the joys o'er dear, —  
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.<sup>14</sup>

### 1791 (Thirty-two)

In March we find Burns writing as follows to Mr. John Ballantine of Ayr: "While here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire, in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a tide of good spirits, which the magic of that sound, Auld Toon o' Ayr, conjured up, I will send my last song to Mr. Ballantine." The song enclosed was the Banks o' Doon:

### BONNIE DOON.

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,  
How can ye bloom sae fair!  
How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'lt break my heart, thou bonnie bird,  
That sings upon the bough;  
Thou minds me o' the happy days  
When my fause love was true.

Thou'lt break my heart, thou bonnie bird,  
That sings beside thy mate;  
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,  
And wistna o' my fate.

---

14. Thomas Carlyle thought Tam O'Shanter was not a work of genius, but of talent merely; not so much a poem as a piece of sparkling rhetoric. Sir Walter Scott, on the other hand, called it "the inimitable Tam O'Shanter," and added: "No poet, with the exception of Shakespeare, ever possessed the power of exciting the most discordant and varied emotions with such rapid transitions." Which was right?

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Aft have I roved by bonnie Doon,  
To see the woodbine twine,  
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,  
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,  
Frae off its thorny tree,  
And my fause luvver *staw* the rose, [=stole]  
But left the thorn wi' me.

A little later Burns sent to Johnson The Posie, which he had written for Mrs. Burns to sing:

### THE POSIE.

TUNE—*The Posie.*

Oh, luve will venture in where it daurna weel be  
seen;

Oh, luve will venture in where wisdom ance has  
been;

But I will down yon river rove, amang the wood sae  
green—

And a' to pu' a *posie* to my ain dear May.

[=bouquet]

The primrose I will pu', the firstling o' the year,  
And I will pu' the pink, the emblem o' my dear:  
For she's the pink o' womankind, and blooms with-  
out a peer—

And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll pu' the budding rose, when Phoebus peeps in  
view,

For it's like a *baummy* kiss o' her sweet bonny mou';  
[balmy]

The hyacinth's for constancy, wi' its unchanging  
blue—

And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The lily it is pure, and the lily it is fair,  
And in her lovely bosom I'll place the lily there;  
The daisy's for simplicity and unaffected air—  
And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

## ON PASTORAL POETRY

The hawthorn I will pu', wi' its locks o' siller gray,  
Where, like an aged man, it stands at break of day;  
But the songster's nest within the bush I winna tak  
away —

And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

The woodbine I will pu' when the e'ening star is  
near,

And the diamond draps o' dew shall be her een sae  
clear;

The violet's for modesty, which weel she fa's to  
wear —

And a' to be a posie to my ain dear May.

I'll tie the posie round wi' the silken band o' luve'  
And I'll place it in her breast, and I'll swear by a,  
above,

That to my latest draught o' life the band shall ne'er  
remove —

And this will be a posie to my ain dear May.

This was followed shortly by a poem on Pastoral Poetry

## ON PASTORAL POETRY.

Hail, Poesie! thou Nymph reserved!

In chase o' thee, what crowds hae swerved

Frae common-sense, or sunk enerved

'Mang heaps o' *clavers*; [= nonsense]

And och! o'er aft thy *joes* hae starved, [= wooers]

'Mid a' thy favors!

Say, Lassie, why thy train amang,

While loud the trump's heroic clang,

And sock or buskin<sup>1</sup> *skelp* alang [= hurry]

To death or marriage,

Scarce ane has tried the shepherd-sang

But wi' miscarriage?

---

1. Sock or buskin = drama.



## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

In Homer's craft Jock Milton thrives;  
Eschylus' pen Will Shakespeare drives;  
Wee Pope, the *knurlin*, 'till him rives [=dwarf]  
    Horatian fame;  
In thy sweet sang, Barbauld, survives  
    E'en Sappho's flame.<sup>2</sup>

But thee, Theocritus, wha matches?  
They're no herd's ballats, Maro's catches;  
Squire Pope but *busks* his *skinklin* patches  
    [=adorns; =weak]

O' heathen tatters:  
I pass by hunders, nameless wretches,  
    That ape their betters.<sup>3</sup>

In this braw age o' wit and lear,  
Will nane the Shepherd's whistle mair  
Blaw sweetly in its native air  
    And rural grace;  
And wi' the far-famed Grecian<sup>4</sup> share  
    A rival place?

Yes! there is ane; a Scottish *callan* — [=boy]  
There's ane; come *forrit*, honest Allan!<sup>5</sup>  
    [=forward]  
Thou needna *jouk* behint the *hallan*, [=hide;  
    =partition]  
    A chiel sae clever;  
The teeth o' time may gnaw Tantallon,<sup>6</sup>  
    But thou's forever!

---

2. Homer, the great Greek epic poet, has been successfully imitated by Milton. Aeschylus, the great Greek writer of tragedy, has an equal in Shakespeare. Pope is as good as Horace, the Roman satirist. Mrs. Barbauld is a worthy rival of Sappho, the Greek poetess.

3. But nobody equals Theocritus, the Greek pastoral poet. Virgil's pastorals are not shepherd's songs. Pope is only a weak imitator of Virgil.

4. Theocritus.

5. Allan Ramsay.

6. A fortress in East Lothian.

## ON PASTORAL POETRY

Thou paints auld Nature to the *nines*, [= perfection]  
In thy sweet Caledonian lines;  
Nae *gowden* stream through myrtles twines,  
[= golden]

Where Philomel,<sup>7</sup>  
While nightly breezes sweep the vines,  
Her griefs will tell!

In *gowany* glens thy *burnie* strays, [ = daisied;  
= brooklet]  
Where bonny lasses bleach their claes;  
Or trots by hazelly *shaws* and *braes*, [ = woods;  
= hills]

Wi' hawthorns gray,  
Where blackbirds join the shepherd's lays  
At close o' day.

Thy rural loves are Nature's sel;  
Nae bombast *spates* o' nonsense swell; [floods]  
Nae *snap* conceits; but that sweet spell [ = smart]  
O' witchin' love,  
That charm that can the strongest quell,  
The sternest move.

On November 11 he removed from the hills of Ellisland to the musty confines of Dumfries. From that moment his moral course was downward. The venture at Ellisland had cost him nearly all of the money which he had received for his poems. His salary as exciseman was now raised, however, from 50 pounds to 75 pounds a year.

### 1792 (Thirty-three)

On February 27 Burns seized and boarded in a gallant manner a smuggling vessel in the Solway. She was sold at auction at Dumfries. The poet purchased some of her guns and sent them to the French Convention. They

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7. Philomel = the nightingale.

## BURNS' LIFE AND POEMS

were, however, retained at Dover by the Custom House officials. The affair probably drew on Burns a reprimand from his superiors in the excise; it certainly hindered his promotion. His pen, too, was comparatively idle. Only two poems of the year need mention. One was inspired by his wife:

She is a winsome wee thing,  
She is a handsome wee thing,  
She is a lo'some wee thing,  
This sweet wee wife o' mine.

The other is a pleasant humorous song:

### DUNCAN GRAY.

"*Duncan Gray*," wrote Burns himself, "is that kind of horse-gallop of an air which precludes sentiment. The ludicrous is its ruling feature."

Duncan Gray cam here to woo,  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!  
On blithe *Yule*-night when we were fou',  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't! [=Christmas]  
Maggie *coost* her head fu' high, [=cast]  
Looked asklent and unco *skeigh*, [=disdainful]  
*Gart* poor Duncan stand *abeigh*; [=made;  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't! =aloof]

Duncan *fleeched*, and Duncan prayed;  
Ha, ha, etc.: [=begged]  
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig<sup>1</sup>!  
Ha, ha, etc.  
Duncan sighed baith out and in,  
*Grat* his een baith bleert and blin',<sup>2</sup> [=wept]  
Spak o' *lowpin'* owre a *linn*; [=leapin;  
Ha, ha, etc. =waterfall]

---

1. Ailsa Craig is a rocky islet in the Firth of Clyde opposite Ayre.

2. Bleerit and blin' = bleared and blind.

## DUNCAN GRAY

Time and chance are but a tide,  
    Ha, ha, etc.;  
Slighted love is sair to bide,  
    Ha, ha, etc.;  
Shall I, like a fool, quoth he,  
For haughty *hizzie* die?                   [=hussy]  
She may gae to—France for me!  
    Ha, ha, etc.

How it comes let doctors tell,  
    Ha, ha, etc.;  
Meg grew sick as he grew well,  
    Ha, ha, etc.  
Something in her bosom wrings,  
For relief a sigh she brings;  
And oh, her een, they spak sic things:  
    Ha, ha, etc.

Duncan was a lad o' grace,  
    Ha, ha, etc.;  
Maggie's was a piteous case,  
    Ha, ha, etc.  
Duncan couldna be her death,  
Swelling pity *smooored* his wrath; [=smothered]  
Now they're *crouse* and *canty* baith; [=happy;  
    Ha, ha, etc.                                       =gay]

In September Mr. George Thomson of Edinburgh began the publication of a collection of national songs and airs, and to this Burns contributed liberally, refusing, with more generosity than judgment, to receive any pay. In all he sent 184 songs to Thomson.

### 1793 (Thirty-four)

This year was signalized by the production of the masterpiece: "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled." It was

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

sent to Thomson in September. We are told that Burns composed it while riding in a storm on the moors. To a friend he wrote concerning it:

"There is a tradition, which I have met with in many parts of Scotland, that it [the air *Hey, tuttie taitie*] was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my yesternight's evening walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode fitted to the air, that one might suppose to be the gallant royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning."

### BRUCE TO HIS MEN AT BANNOCKBURN.

TUNE—*Hey, tuttie taitie.*

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,  
Scots, wham Bruce <sup>1</sup> has aften led,  
Welcome to your gory bed,  
Or to victory!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;  
See the front o' battle lour;  
See approach proud Edward's power—  
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?  
Wha can fill a coward's grave?  
Wha sae base as be a slave?  
Let him turn and flee!

Wha for Scotland's king and law  
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,  
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',  
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!  
By your sons in servile chains!  
We will drain our dearest veins,  
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!  
Tyrants fall in every foe!  
Liberty's in every blow!  
Let us do or die!

---

1. Robert Bruce = consult an encyclopædia or a biographical dictionary.

## A RED, RED ROSE

"The accidental recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some struggles of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania," said Burns. We are perhaps justified, therefore, in regarding the song as much a product of Burns's sympathy with the French Revolution as of his Scottish patriotism.

This same sympathy was causing him infinite trouble. Though he had been received in Dumfries at first with much cordiality, he was now regarded with little favor. His careless tongue had angered his superiors. He had publicly declared Washington a better man than Pitt. Promotion was denied him. Poverty threatened. The mortification of losing the American colonies was still fresh in the British mind. The atrocities of the reign of terror were beginning to cast their shadows before. Louis XVI had been led to the scaffold. Marie Antoinette was languishing in prison. War between England and France was imminent. At this juncture Burns declared Washington a better man than Pitt and sent guns to the French Assembly. Is it strange that he was denied promotion in the excise and cut by Dumfries society?

### 1794 (Thirty-five)

One of his best love songs was composed early in this year:

#### A RED, RED ROSE.

TUNE—*Graham's Strathspey.*

Oh, my luve's like a red, red rose,  
That's newly sprung in June;  
Oh, my luve's like the melody,  
That's sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonny lass,  
So deep in luve am I;  
And I will luve thee still, my dear,  
Till a' the seas gang dry.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun,  
I will luve thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!  
And fare thee weel awhile!  
And I will come again, my luve,  
Though it were ten thousand mile.

On February 22 he sent to the Morning Post an Ode for Washington's Birthday. It appears to have been declined—perhaps without thanks; indeed, with the exception of the last paragraph, it was not published until 1876:

No Spartan tube, no Attic shell,  
No lyre Aeolian I awake;  
'T is liberty's bold note I swell;  
Thy harp, Columbia, let me take!  
See gathering thousands, while I sing,  
A broken chain exulting bring,  
And dash it in a tyrant's face,  
And tell him he no more is feared—  
No more the despot of Columbia's race!  
A tyrant's proudest insults brav'd,  
They shout—a People freed! They hail an Empire sav'd.

Where is man's godlike form?  
Where is that brow erect and bold—  
That eye that can unmov'd behold  
The wildest rage, the loudest storm,  
That e'er created fury dared to raise?  
Avaunt! thou caitiff, servile, base,  
That tremblest at a despot's nod,  
Yet, crouching under the iron rod,  
Canst laud the hand that struck the insulting blow!  
Art thou of man's imperial line?  
Dost boast that countenance divine?  
Each skulking feature answers, No!



## ODE FOR WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

But come, ye sons of Liberty,  
Columbia's offspring, brave as free,  
In danger's hour still flaming in the van;  
Ye know, and dare maintain, the Royalty of Man.

Alfred! on thy starry throne,  
Surrounded by the tuneful choir,  
The bards that erst have struck the patriot lyre,  
And rous'd the freeborn Briton's soul of fire,  
No more thy England own!  
Dare injur'd nations form the great design,  
To make detested tyrants bleed?  
Thy England execrates the glorious deed!  
Beneath her hostile banners waving,  
Every pang of honour braving,  
England in thunder calls, "The tyrant's cause is mine!"  
That hour accurst how did the fiends rejoice  
And hell, thro' all her confines, raise the exulting voice,  
That hour which saw the generous English name  
Tinct with such damn'd deeds of everlasting shame!

Thee, Caledonia! thy wild heaths among,  
Fam'd for the martial deed, the heaven-taught song,  
To thee I turn with swimming eyes;  
Where is that soul of Freedom fled?  
Immingled with the mighty dead,  
Beneath that hallow'd turf where Wallace lies.  
Hear it not, Wallace, in thy bed of death.  
Ye babbling winds! in silence sweep;  
Disturb not ye the hero's sleep,  
Nor give the coward secret breath!  
Is this the ancient Caledonian form,  
Firm as the rock, resistless as the storm?  
How me that eye which shot immortal hate,  
Blasting the despot's proudest bearing;  
How me that arm which, nerv'd with thundering fate,  
Crush'd Usurpation's boldest daring!—  
Mark-quench'd as yonder sinking star,  
No more that glance lightens afar;  
That palsied arm no more whirls on the waste of war!

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

Among his other contributions to Thomson in 1794 was the song, *My Nannie's Awa*:

### MY NANNIE'S AWA'.

Now in her green mantle blithe Nature arrays,  
And listens the lambkins that bleat o'er the braes;  
While birds warble welcomes in ilka green *shaw*;  
[= grove]

But to me it's delightless — my Nannie's awa'.

The snawdrap and primrose our woodlands adorn  
And violets bathe in the weet o' the morn;  
They pain my sad bosom, sae sweetly they blaw,  
They mind me o' Nannie — and Nannie's awa'.

Thou laverock that springs frae the dew's o' the  
lawn,

The shepherd to warn o' the gray-breaking dawn;  
And thou mellow *mavis* that hails the night fa',  
Give over for pity — my Nannie's awa'. [= thrush]

Come autumn, sae pensive, in yellow and gray,  
And soothe me with tidings o' Nature's decay:  
The dark dreary winter and wild driving snaw  
Alane can delight me — now Nannie's awa'!

The year 1794 ended happily with the production of the song:

### SOMEBODY!

TUNE — *For the Sake o' Somebody!*

My heart is sair — I darena tell —  
My heart is sair for somebody;  
I could wake a winter night  
For the sake of somebody.  
Oh-hon! for somebody!  
Oh-hey! for somebody!  
I could range the world around,  
For the sake o' somebody!

## FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,  
Oh, sweetly smile on somebody!  
Frae ilka danger keep him free,  
And send me safe my somebody!  
Oh-hon! for somebody!  
Oh-hey! for somebody!  
I wad do—what wad I not?  
For the sake o' somebody!

### 1795 (Thirty-six)

On January 1, this was followed by A Man's a Man for  
a' That, which was sent on January 15 to Thomson:

## FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT.

Is there, for honest poverty,  
That hangs his head,<sup>1</sup> and a' that!  
The coward slave, we pass him by;  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Our toils obscure, and a' that;  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the *gowd* for a' that! [=gold]

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hodden-gray,<sup>2</sup> and a' that;  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,  
A man's a man for a' that!  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their tinsel show, and a' that;  
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that!

Ye see yon *birkie*, ca'd a lord, [=prig]  
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;  
Though hundreds worship at his word,  
He's but a *coof* for a' that. [=fool]

1. If there is anybody who hangs his head on account of honest  
overty.

2. Coarse gray cloth.

## BURNS'S LIFE AND POEMS

For a' that, and a' that,  
His ribbon, star, and a' that;  
The man of independent mind,  
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and a' that;  
But an honest man's *aboon* his might, [= above]  
Guid faith, he *maunna fa'* that! [= cannot do]  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their dignities, and a' that;  
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,  
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may—  
As come it will for a' that—  
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,  
May *bear* the *gree*, and a' that. [= win; = prize]  
For a' that, and a' that,  
It's coming yet, for a' that,  
That man to man, the warld o'er,  
Shall brothers be for a' that!

It is said that it is this song for which Burns is best known among those nations which have suffered most from the tyranny of kings and nobles.

In February Burns visited Ecclefechan, which he described as an unfortunate wicked little village. It is perhaps worth while to notice that, in December of this same year, in this same despised village, was born Thomas Carlyle, the most sympathetic and appreciative of all Burns's critics.

Meanwhile momentous events were happening in France. The reign of terror was horrifying the world. War between England and France had been declared. The French were gathering an army to cross the Channel. Everywhere public sentiment, which at first had been strongly for the revolution, was undergoing a change.

## THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS

Everywhere companies of soldiers to repel the threatened attack were organized. In March Burns joined the Dumfries Volunteers, and for them he soon after wrote the song, *Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?* This became popular throughout Britain and did much to eradicate the disfavor due to the poet's previous utterances concerning political matters, besides soothing disaffection everywhere.

### THE DUMFRIES VOLUNTEERS.

Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?

Then let the *loons* beware, sir; [ = rascals]

There's wooden walls upon our seas,

And volunteers on shore, sir.

The Nith shall run to Corsicon,

And Criffel sink in Solway,<sup>1</sup>

Ere we permit a foreign foe

On British ground to rally

Fal de ral, etc.

Oh, let us not like snarling *tykes* [ = dogs.]

In wrangling be divided;

Till, slap, come in an *unco* loon, [ = foreign]

And wi' a *rung* decide it. [ = club]

Be Britain still to Britain true,

Among oursels united;

For never but by British hands

Maun British wrangs be righted.

Fal de ral, etc.

The kettle o' the Kirk and State,

Perhaps a *clout* may fail in't; [ = patch]

But deil a foreign tinkler loon

Shall ever *ca'* a nail in't. [ = drive]

---

1. Corsicon is a hill near the source of the River Nith; Criffel a mountain near the mouth of the same river, where it flows into the Solway.

Our fathers' bluid the kettle bought,  
 And wha wad dare to spoil it, —  
 By Heaven, the sacrilegious dog  
 Shall fuel be to boil it!  
 Fal de ral, etc.

The wretch that wad a tyrant own,  
 And the wretch his true-born brother,  
 Wh' 'ould set the *mob* aboon the *throne*,  
 May they be damned together!  
 Who will not sing "God save the King,"  
 Shall hang as high's the steeple;  
 But while we sing "God save the King,"  
 We'll ne'er forget the People.

In May he struck off The Braw Wooer:

### THE BRAW WOOER.

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,  
 And sair wi' his love he did *deave* me; [=deafen]  
 I said there was naething I hated like men —  
 The deuce gae wi'm to believe, believe me;  
 The deuce gae wi'm to believe me.

He spak o' the darts in my bonie black een,  
 And vow'd for my love he was diein;  
 I said he might die when he liked for Jean;  
 The Lord forgie me for liein, for liein,  
 The Lord forgie me for liein.

A weel stocked *mailen*, himsel for the laird, [=farm]  
 And marriage aff-hand, were his proffers;  
 I never *loot* on that I kend it, or car'd; [=let]  
 But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers;  
 But thought I might hae waur offers.

But what wad we think? In a fortnight or less,  
 The deil tak his taste to gae near her!  
 He up the lang *loan* to my black cousin Bess, [=lane]  
 Guess ye how, the jad' I could bear her, could bear her,  
 Guess ye how, the jad' I could bear her.

## THE BRAW WOOPER

But a' the neist week, as I fretted wi' care,  
I gaed to the tryste o' Dalgarnock,  
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there.  
I glowr'd as I'd seen a *warlock*, a warlock, [=he-witch]  
I glowr'd as I'd seen a warlock.

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,  
Lest neebors might say I was saucy;  
My wooer he caper'd as he'd been in drink,  
And vow'd I was his dear lassie, dear lassie,  
And vow'd I was his dear lassie.

I *speir'd* for my cousin fu' *counth*y and sweet, [=asked;  
Gin she had recover'd her hearin', =demurely]  
An' how her new *shoon* fit her auld *shachl't* feet —  
[=shoes; misshapen]

But, Heavens! how he fell a swearin, a swearin,  
But, Heavens! how he fell a swearin.

He begged for gudesake, I wad be his wife,  
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow,  
So e'en to preserve the poor body in life,  
I think I maun wed him to-morrow,  
I think I maun wed him to-morrow.

The year that had opened with so much promise, however, was destined to close in sorrow. Burns's health had begun to break. The task of providing for his growing family was proving a heavy burden. One little song of the period doubtless reflects a sentiment that came sadly home to him:

“O that I had ne'er been married  
I wad never had nae care;  
Now I've gotten wife an' weans,  
An' they cry 'Crowdie'<sup>1</sup> ever mair.  
Ance crowdie, twice crowdie,  
Three times crowdie in a day,  
Gin ye crowdie ony more,  
Ye'll crowdie a' my meal away.”

NOTE

1. Crowdie = meal mixed with milk.



One beautiful song, like a dash of sunshine across a stormy sky, completes the record for the year:

MALLY'S MEEK, MALLY'S SWEET.

CHORUS—Mally's meek, Mally's sweet,  
           Mally's modest and discreet;  
 Mally's rare, Mally's fair,  
           Mally's every way complete.

As I was walking up the street  
 A barefit maid I chanced to meet,  
 But Oh the road was very hard!  
 For that fair maiden's tender feet.

It were mair meet that those fine feet  
 Were weel lac'd up in silken *shoon*,       [ = shoes]  
 And 't were more fit that she should sit  
 Within yon chariot gilt *aboorn*.       [ = above]

Her yellow hair, beyond compare,  
 Comes trinklin down her swanlike neck;  
 And her two eyes, like stars in skies,  
 Wad keep a sinking ship frae wreck.

1796 (Thirty-seven)

One night in January the poet sat late at the Globe Tavern. On his way home he sank down and fell asleep in the snow. Severe illness followed. He never fully recovered. Still, however, he kept on writing for Thomson. In February he sent to him A Lass wi' a Tocher:

"Awa' wi' your witchcraft o' Beauty's alarms,  
 The slender bit Beauty you grasp in your arms;  
 O gie me the lass that has acres o' charms,  
 O gie me the lass wi' the weel-stockit farms.

## MALLY'S MEEK, MALLY'S SWEET

"Your Beauty's a flower in the morning that blows,  
And withers the faster, the faster it grows;

\* \* \* \* \*

But the sweet yellow darlings wi' Geordie<sup>1</sup> impress'd  
The langer ye hae them the mair they're carest."

During his illness he was nursed by Miss Jessie Lewars, the daughter of a brother exciseman. As has been finely said, he had no gold with which to repay her ministrations, but he rewarded them with the only thing he was rich enough to give—a song of immortal sweetness. One morning he said to her, "If you will play for me some favorite tune for which you desire new words, I will do my best to make you some. She sat down at the piano and several times played over the air of an old song beginning:

"The robin came to the wren's nest,  
And *keekit* in, and *keekit* in." [ = looked]

In a few minutes the poet presented his nurse with these lines:

"O wert thou in the cauld blast,  
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,  
My plaidie to the angry *airt*, [ = wind]  
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee;  
Or did misfortune's bitter storms  
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,  
Thy *biel*d should be my bosom, [ = shield]  
To share it a', to share it a'.

"Or were I in the wildest waste,  
Sae black an' bare, sae black an' bare  
The desert were a paradise,  
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.  
Or were I monarch of the globe,  
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,  
The brightest jewel in my crown  
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

---

1. Coins with King George's picture.

On July 4, as a last resort, he went to Brow, a sea-bathing town on the Solway. Here he was visited by Mrs. Riddel, who saw that the mark of death was stamped already on his features. He himself was well aware of his condition; in fact, he greeted her with the remark: "Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?" To his despairing wife he said: "I shall be more respected a hundred years from now than I am to-day." His last days were embittered by financial distress. One of his creditors threatened him with a jail. He wrote piteous letters to two friends, begging for loans. His ruling passion, however, remained strong even in death. His career as a poet ended as it had begun, with a love song. His last metrical composition, written on July 12, is the following:

## FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS.

CHORUS—Fairest maid on Devon banks,  
 Crystal Devon, winding Devon,  
 Wilt thou lay that frown aside,  
 And smile as thou wert wont to do?

Full well thou knowst I love thee dear;  
 Couldst thou to malice lend an ear!  
 O did not love exclaim: "Forbear,  
 Nor use a faithful lover so."

Then come, thou fairest of the fair,  
 Those wonted smiles, O, let me share;  
 And by thy beauteous self I swear,  
 No love but thine my heart shall know.

On July 18 he returned to Dumfries. When he alighted from his carriage he could scarcely stand. Three days later all was over.

He was buried with military honors, on July 24. Ten

## FAIREST MAID ON DEVON BANKS

thousand persons followed his body to the grave. His death called forth an outburst of national regard. A generous subscription was collected for the benefit of his widow and his children. An imposing monument soon rose to mark his resting place in the churchyard at Dumfries. The stream of pilgrims who began shortly to set their faces toward this shrine has proved a constantly increasing one. Thither in due time came William Wordsworth and John Keats and Thomas Carlyle and Alfred Tennyson. But the honor of being the most appreciative of all the visitors at Dumfries, like the honor of being the most reverent and loving of the pilgrims to Ayr, belongs to an American. It was Fitz-Greene Halleck who wrote the words that most fitly describe the emotions of all who go thither in order to do honor to Burns, and that refuse most persistently to leave the memory:

“Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines,  
Shrines to no code or creed confined,  
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,  
The Meccas of the mind.”

From blackest soils the tallest corn upsprings. From the toil, sorrow, and tragedy of Burns's life there has grown a harvest of fame scarcely to be matched. Up to 1887 there had appeared in Scotland 143 complete editions of his poems, in England 145, in the United States 60, in Ireland 16, in Canada 9, in France 3, in Germany 18. These 394 reprints are sufficient evidence of the eagerness with which he has been read. Of the love inspired by that reading there is also ample concrete evidence. Burns statues and monuments are found today more widely and numerously distributed over the face of the earth probably than those of any other poet. The following list, taken from *The World's Memorials of Robert Burns*, by Edward Goodwillie, shows the most important of these:

# ROBERT BURNS

Location.	Erected.	Character.
Alloway, Scotland . . . . .	1820	Monument
Edinburgh, Scotland . . . . .	1831	Monument
Glasgow, Scotland . . . . .	1877	Statue
Kilmarnock, Scotland . . . . .	1879	Monument
Dundee, Scotland . . . . .	1880	Statue
Dumfries, Scotland . . . . .	1882	Statue
Stirling, Scotland . . . . .	1886	Bust
Ayr, Scotland . . . . .	1891	Statue
Aberdeen, Scotland . . . . .	1892	Statue
Irvine, Scotland . . . . .	1896	Statue
Paisley, Scotland . . . . .	1911	Statue
Mauchline, Scotland . . . . .	1898	Memorial
Leith, Scotland . . . . .	1898	Statue
New York, N. Y. . . . .	1880	Statue
Albany, N. Y. . . . .	1888	Statue
Barre, Vermont . . . . .	1899	Statue
Fall River, Massachusetts . . . . .	1899	Bust
Denver, Colorado . . . . .	1904	Statue
Chicago, Illinois . . . . .	1906	Statue
San Francisco, California . . . . .	1908	Statue
Milwaukee, Wisconsin . . . . .	1909	Statue
Atlanta, Georgia . . . . .	1911	Replica of Burn's birthplace
Boston, Massachusetts . . . . .	1911	Monument
Detroit, Michigan . . . . .	1921	Statue
London, England . . . . .	1884	Statue
London, England . . . . .	1885	Bust in West- minster Abbey
Carlisle, England . . . . .	1898	Bust
Liverpool, England . . . . .	1896	Statue of High- land Mary
Ballarat, Victoria, Australia . . . . .	1884	Statue
Melbourne, Victoria . . . . .	1902	Statue
Dunedin, New Zealand . . . . .	1887	Statue
Adelaide, South Australia . . . . .	1894	Statue
Sydney, New South Wales . . . . .	1905	Statue
Toronto, Ontario . . . . .	1902	Statue
Fredericton, New Brunswick . . . . .	1906	Statue
Belfast, Ireland . . . . .	1893	Statue

## GLOSSARY

*A'*, all.  
*Abeigh*, at a shy distance.  
*Aboon*, above.  
*Abread*, abroad, in sight.  
*Acquent*, acquainted.  
*Ae*, one.  
*Aff*, off.  
*Aff-hand*, at once.  
*Aft*, oft.  
*A-gley*, off the right line.  
*Aiblins*, perhaps.  
*Ain*, own.  
*Airns*, irons.  
*Airt*, the point from which the wind blows.  
*Amaist*, almost.  
*Amang*, among.  
*Ance*, once.  
*Ane*, one.  
*Aniher*, another.  
*An's*, and am.  
*Asklent*, aslant.  
*Auld*, old.  
*Awa'*, away.  
*Awfu'*, awful.  
*Aye*, always.  
  
*Ba'*, ball.  
*Bairn*, child.  
*Baith*, both.  
*Bane*, bone.  
*Bardie*, dim. of bard.  
*Bauld*, bold.  
*Bawk*, an open space in a cornfield.  
*Baws'nt*, white-striped.  
*Bawtie*, a familiar name for a dog.  
*Bear*, barley.  
*Beastie*, dim. of beast.  
*Beets*, adds fuel to fire.  
*Belang*, belong to.  
*Beld*, bald.  
*Belye*, by and by.  
*Ben*, in, into the spence or parlor.  
*Bethankit*, the grace after meat.  
*Bickering*, scurrying.  
*Bield*, shelter.  
*Bien*, plentiful.  
*Big*, to build.  
*Billie*, a young fellow.  
*Birdie*, dim. of bird.  
*Birk*, the birch.  
*Birkie*, a spirited fellow.  
*Bizz*, a buzz.  
*Blastie*, a term of contempt.  
*Blastit*, blasted, withered.  
*Blate*, shamefaced, bashful.  
*Blaud*, quantity.  
*Blaw*, to blow, to brag.  
*Blawn*, blown.  
*Bleert*, bleared.

*Bleeze*, a blaze.  
*Bleezing*, blazing.  
*Blellum*, an idle-talking fellow.  
*Bl ether*, bladder.  
*Blethering*, talking idly.  
*Blin'*, blind.  
*Blink*, a look.  
*Bluid*, blood.  
*Boddle*, a small coin.  
*Bogle*, ghost.  
*Bonny*, beautiful.  
*Boorrees*, elders.  
*Bore*, hole or rent.  
*Bousing*, drinking.  
*Brae*, the slope of a hill.  
*Braid*, broad.  
*Braik*, harrow.  
*Brak*, did break.  
*Brak's*, broke his.  
*Brat*, bits.  
*Brattle*, a scamper.  
*Braw*, handsome.  
*Brawlie*, perfectly.  
*Breastie*, dim. of breast.  
*Breeks*, breeches.  
*Brent*, straight, smooth. unwrinkled.  
*Brither*, brother.  
*Brogue*, trick.  
*Brose*, food.  
*Brunstane*, brimstone.  
*Buirldy*, rugged.  
*Bum-clock*, beetle.  
*Bure*, bore.  
*Burdie*, damsel.  
*Burn*, stream.  
*Burnie*, dim. of burn.  
*Busk*, adorn.  
*But*, without.  
*Byke*, bee-hive.  
  
*Ca'*, to drive, call.  
*Cadger*, hawker.  
*Callan*, boy.  
*Cam*, came.  
*Canna*, cannot.  
*Cannie*, easy, gentle.  
*Canrip*, pleasant.  
*Cape-stane*, cope-stone.  
*Carlin*, old woman.  
*Cartes*, cards.  
*Cauld*, cold.  
*Chaniers*, bagpipes.  
*Chap*, fellow.  
*Chapman*, merchant.  
*Cheerful*, cheerful.  
*Chiel*, fellow.  
*Chimla*, chimney.  
*Chow*, chew.  
*Claes*, clothes.  
*Clamb*, climbed.



# GLOSSARY

*Clash*, gossip.  
*Clatter*, to talk idly.  
*Clautht*, clutched.  
*Clavers*, idle stories.  
*Cleekit*, linked themselves.  
*Clips*, shears.  
*Cloot*, hoof.  
*Clout*, a patch.  
*Coft*, bought.  
*Cood*, cud.  
*Coost*, cast.  
*Cootie*, pail.  
*Couldna*, could not.  
*Couthie*, kindly, loving.  
*Cow'rin'*, cowering.  
*Cowr*, to cower.  
*Cozie*, cosy.  
*Crack*, a story or harangue, to talk.  
*Crambo-jingle*, rhymes.  
*Cranreuch*, hoar-frost.  
*Craw*, crow.  
*Creel*, whirl.  
*Creeshie*, greasy.  
*Croon*, a hollow and continued moan.  
*Crouse*, gleeful, lively.  
*Crowdie*, porridge.  
*Cummock*, a short staff with a crooked head.  
*Cushat*, pigeon.  
*Cutty*, short, bob-tailed.  
  
*Daimen-icker*, an ear of corn now and then.  
*Daur*, to dare.  
*Daurna*, dare not.  
*Deave*, to deafen.  
*Deed*, dead, death.  
*Deil*, devil.  
*Dight*, to make ready, to wipe.  
*Dine*, dinner-time.  
*Ding*, surpass.  
*Dinna*, do not.  
*Dirl*, to vibrate.  
*Dool*, sorrow.  
*Douce*, grave, sober.  
*Doup*, throat.  
*Dour*, stubborn.  
*Dowff*, pithless, silly.  
*Dowie*, low-spirited.  
*Downa*, cannot.  
*Doytin'*, walking stupidly.  
*Dribble*, drizzle.  
*Drouthy*, thirsty.  
*Drumlie*, muddy.  
*Dub*, puddle.  
*Duddie*, ragged.  
*Duddies*, garments.  
*Dune*, done.  
  
*E'e*, eye.  
*Een*, eyes.  
*Eldritch*, frightful.  
*Embros*, Edinburgh.  
*Enow*, enough.  
*Etile*, design.  
*Eydent*, diligent.  
  
*Fa'*, lot, to fall; *weel she fa's* she has a good right.  
*Fain*, fond.  
*Fair-fa'*, a benediction.

*Fairin*, a present, a reward.  
*Faithfu'*, faithful.  
*Fand*, found.  
*Fash*, to trouble.  
*Fasten-e'en*, Shrove-tide.  
*Fatt'rels*, ribbon-ends.  
*Fause*, false.  
*Faut*, fault.  
*Fawsont*, decent.  
*Fechtin*, fighting.  
*Feck*, the greater portion, consideration.  
*Feckless*, powerless.  
*Feg*, fig.  
*Fell*, nippy, tasty.  
*Fend*, to live comfortably.  
*Ferlie*, a term of contempt.  
*Fidge*, to fidget.  
*Fidgin-fain*, fidgeting with eagerness.  
*Fient*, a petty oath.  
*Fier*, healthy, sound.  
*Fiere*, friend, comrade.  
*Fissle*, to fidget.  
*Fit*, foot.  
*Flang*, did fling or caper.  
*Flannen*, flannel.  
*Fleech'd*, supplicated.  
*Fleesh*, fleece.  
*Flichterin'*, fluttering.  
*Flingin*, capering.  
*Fodgel*, plump.  
*Foggage*, stray vegetable material used by birds, etc., for nests.  
*Forbears*, forefathers.  
*Forgather*, to make acquaintance with.  
*Forgie*, forgive.  
*Forjesket*, tired.  
*Forrit*, forward.  
*Fou*, tipsy.  
*Frae*, from.  
*Frien'*, friend.  
*Fu'*, full.  
*Fyke*, fret.  
  
*Gab*, mouth.  
*Gaels*, manners.  
*Gang*, to go.  
*Gar*, to make.  
*Gart*, made.  
*Gash*, clever.  
*Gat*, got.  
*Gate*, way or road.  
*Gaudsman*, a ploughboy.  
*Gaun*, going.  
*Gawsie*, handsome.  
*Gear*, wealth, goods.  
*Get*, offspring.  
*Ghaist*, ghost.  
*Gie*, give.  
*Gif*, if.  
*Giftie*, dim. of gift.  
*Giglet*, girl.  
*Girn*, to grin.  
*Glinted*, glanced.  
*Glower*, to stare.  
*Gowan*, the daisy.  
*Gowany*, daisied.  
*Gowd*, gold.  
*Gowden*, golden.  
*Gowdspink*, goldfinch.  
*Graith*, harness, field implements.



# GLOSSARY

*Granes*, groans.  
*Grat*, wept.  
*Gratefu'*, grateful.  
*Gree*, a prize.  
*Greet*, to weep.  
*Grissle*, gristle.  
*Grozet*, gooseberry.  
*Grushie*, thriving.  
*Grutten*, wept.  
*Gude*, the Supreme Being, good.  
*Guid*, good.

*Ha'*, hall.  
*Ha'-Bible*, hall-Bible.  
*Hae*, have.  
*Haffets*, the temples.  
*Hafflins*, partly.  
*Haggis*, a kind of pudding boiled in the stomach of a cow or sheep, the national Scots pudding.  
*Hain*, to spare, to save.  
*Hairst*, harvest.  
*Hal'*, *hald*, an abiding-place.  
*Hale*, whole, entire.  
*Halesome*, wholesome.  
*Hallan*, a particular partition wall in a cottage.  
*Hame*, home.  
*Hamely*, homely.  
*Han'*, hand.  
*Hand'aurk*, hand-work.  
*Hansel*, first gift.  
*Hap-shackled*, foot-tied.  
*Harn*, yarn.  
*Hash*, a soft, useless fellow.  
*Haud*, to hold.  
*Havins*, good manners.  
*Hawkie*, a cow, properly one with a white face.  
*Hearse*, hoarse.  
*Heckle*, comb.  
*Heft*, haft.  
*Hersel*, herself.  
*Het*, hot.  
*Heuch*, pit.  
*Hilch*, to hobble.  
*Himself*, himself.  
*Hing*, to hang.  
*Histie*, dry, barren.  
*Hitch*, loop or knot.  
*Hizzie*, a young woman.  
*Horn*, a spoon made of horn.  
*Hotch'd*, fidgeted.  
*Howe*, hollow.  
*Houlets*, owls.  
*Housie*, dim. of house.  
*Howkin*, digging.  
*Hunder*, hundred.  
*Hurdies*, hips.

*Ilk*, each.  
*Ilka*, every.  
*Ingine*, genius, ingenuity.  
*Ingle*, fireplace.  
*I'se*, I shall or will.  
*Ithers*, others.

*Jad*, jade.  
*Jauk*, to dally or trifle.  
*Jauaps*, splashes.  
*Jimp*, to jump, slender.

*Jinkin*, dodging.  
*Jo*, a sweetheart, a term expressing affection and some degree of familiarity.  
*Joes*, lovers.  
*Jouk*, to duck.

*Kail*, broth, calewort.  
*Kebbuck*, cheese.  
*Keek*, to peep.  
*Keepit*, kept.  
*Ken*, to know.  
*Kennin*, trifle.  
*Ket*, fleece.  
*Kiaugh*, anxiety.  
*Keckle*, cackle.  
*Kin'*, kind.  
*Kirk*, church.  
*Kirsen*, to christen.  
*Kirn*, harvest home.  
*Kittle*, tune.  
*Knappin-hammers*, hammers for breaking stones.  
*Knowe*, knoll.  
*Knurlin*, dwarf.  
*Kye*, cows.

*Lade*, load.  
*Lag*, slow.  
*Laird*, landlord.  
*Laithfu'*, bashful, loathful.  
*Lane*, alone.  
*Lanely*, lonely.  
*Lang*, long.  
*Lap*, did leap.  
*Lave*, the rest.  
*Laverock*, the lark.  
*Lea'e*, leave.  
*Lear*, lore, learning.  
*Leeze*, love.  
*Linket*, tipped deftly!  
*Linkin*, hurrying.  
*Linn*, a waterfall.  
*Lint*, flax.  
*Lintwhite*, linnet.  
*Loan*, lane.  
*Lo'ed*, loved.  
*Loof*, palm.  
*Loot*, let.  
*Loup*, to leap.  
*Lowe*, flame.  
*Lowpin'*, leaping.  
*Lug*, ear.  
*Luggie*, a small wooden dish with a handle.  
*Luve*, love.  
*Lyart*, gray.

*Mair*, more.  
*Mak*, to make.  
*Mailen*, farm.  
*Maukin*, hare.  
*Maun*, must.  
*Maunna*, must not.  
*Mavis*, thrush.  
*Melder*, corn or grain of any kind sent to the mill to be ground.  
*Mell*, to associate with.  
*Mense*, good manners.  
*Menseless*, mannerless.  
*Mickle*, large.

# GLOSSARY

*Midden*, dunghill.  
*Mirk*, dark.  
*Mither*, mother.  
*Monie*, many.  
*Mool*, jail.  
*Moop*, to nibble.  
*Mou'*, mouth.  
*Moudieworts*, moles.  
*Mournfu'*, mournful.  
*Muckle*, much.  
*Mysel*, myself.

*Na'*, not, no.  
*Nae*, no.  
*Naebody*, nobody.  
*Naething*, nothing.  
*Naig*, nag.  
*Nane*, none.  
*Nappy*, ale.  
*Neebor*, neighbor.  
*Neist*, next.  
*Nieve*, fist.  
*Nit*, nut.  
*Nocht*, nothing.  
*Nowie*, cattle.

*O'*, of.  
*Ony*, any.  
*Oursel*, ourselves.  
*Owre*, over.

*Paidl't*, paddled, waded.  
*Painch*, paunch, stomach.  
*Patrick*, partridge.  
*Parrich*, porridge, oatmeal pudding.  
*Pat*, put.  
*Pattle*, a stick with which a ploughman clears the dirt from his plough.  
*Pawky*, roughish.  
*Penny-fee*, wages.  
*Plack*, an old Scotch coin, third part of a Scotch penny.  
*Plaidie*, dim. of plaid.  
*Pleugh*, to plough.  
*Poind*, attach.  
*Poorlih*, poverty.  
*Posie*, bouquet.  
*Pou*, to pull.  
*Poussie*, hare.  
*Pow*, head, skull.  
*Pownie*, pony.  
*Pu'*, to pull.  
*Punds*, pounds.  
*Pu'pit*, pulpit.

*Quat*, quit.  
*Quo'*, said.

*Rair*, to roar.  
*Ramfeezled*, tired.  
*Rape*, rope.  
*Rash*, a rush.  
*Raw*, row.  
*Reaming*, foaming.  
*Reave*, rob.  
*Reekin'*, smoking.  
*Reekit*, smoked.  
*Remead*, remedy.  
*Restricket*, restricted.  
*Rig*, ridge.  
*Riggin*, roof.  
*Rigwooddie*, withered, sapless.

*Rin*, run.  
*Ripp*, a handful of unthrashed corn.  
*Rive*, to burst.  
*Rives*, tears to pieces.  
*Rockin'*, a social gathering, the women spinning on the rede or distaff.  
*Roose*, to praise.  
*Roupel*, hoarse as with a cold.  
*Row*, to roll.  
*Rowt*, bellow.  
*Rozet*, rosin.  
*Rung*, cudgel.

*Sae*, so.  
*Saft*, soft.  
*Sair*, sore, to serve.  
*sairly*, sorely.  
*Sang*, song.  
*Sark*, shirt.  
*Saunt*, saint.  
*Saut*, salt.  
*Scath*, hurt.  
*Scaud*, scald.  
*Scaur*, afraid.  
*Sconner*, disgust.  
*Screed*, wrench.  
*Scraichin'*, screeching.  
*Set*, self.  
*Shachl't*, deformed.  
*Shaw*, show, a wooden dell.  
*Sheugh*, ditch.  
*Shog*, shock.  
*Shools*, shovels.  
*Shoon*, shoes.  
*Shor'd*, offered.  
*Shouter*, shoulder.  
*Sic*, such.  
*Siller*, silver money.  
*Simmer*, summer.  
*Sin'*, since.  
*Sinsyne*, since.  
*Skeigh*, shy, proud, disdainful.  
*Skellum*, a worthless fellow.  
*Skelp*, to run.  
*Skelpin'*, walking smartly.  
*Skelpit*, hurried.  
*Skinking*, thin, watery.  
*Skinklin'*, glittering.  
*Skirl*, to shriek.  
*Skنتين*, slanting.  
*Slaps*, gates, stiles, breaches in hedges, hits.  
*Slee*, sly.  
*Sleekit*, sleek.  
*Smeedum*, dust, powder.  
*Smoor'd*, smothered.  
*Smytree*, tribe.  
*Snash*, insolence.  
*Snaw*, snow.  
*Sned*, to lop, to cut.  
*Snell*, bitter, biting.  
*Snool*, to cringe, to submit tamely.  
*Snowkit*, poked.  
*Sonsie*, jolly, comely.  
*Soupe*, a spoonful, a small quantity of anything liquid.  
*Souple*, supple.  
*Souter*, shoemaker.  
*Sowth*, to try over a tune with a low whistle.  
*Spairges*, splashes.  
*Spak*, spake.

# GLOSSARY

*Spate*, a flood.  
*Spaniel*, having the spavin.  
*Spean*, to wean.  
*Speel*, climb.  
*Spence*, the country parlor.  
*Spier*, to ask, inquire.  
*Spier't*, inquired.  
*Sprattle*, to struggle.  
*Squatter*, flap.  
*Sprackled*, scrambled.  
*Squattle*, to sprawl.  
*Stacher*, to stagger.  
*Stack*, stuck.  
*Stane*, stone.  
*Stant*, sting.  
*Staw*, stole, stew.  
*Steer*, to injure.  
*Stibble*, stubble.  
*Stilt*, limp.  
*Stirk*, cow or bullock a year old.  
*Stoor*, bass.  
*Stoure*, dust.  
*Strang*, strong.  
*Strathspey*, a Scottish dance.  
*Strunt*, to strut.  
*Sturt*, harass.  
*Sugh*, a rushing sound.  
*Swall'd*, swelled.  
*Swats*, ale.  
*Swith*, swift.  
*Syne*, then, since.  
  
*Taen*, taken.  
*Tak*, to take.  
*Tane*, the one.  
*Tapelless*, spiritless.  
*Tapmost*, topmost.  
*Taps*, tops.  
*Tauld*, told.  
*Tawted*, matted, uncombed.  
*Teats*, small quantities.  
*Teen*, provocation, chagrin.  
*Tent*, to take heed, mark.  
*Tentie*, heedful.  
*Thack*, thatch.  
*Thae*, these.  
*Thairm*, intestine.  
*Thegither*, together.  
*Themsel*, themselves.  
*Thir*, these.  
*Thirl*, thrill.  
*Thole*, to suffer, to endure.  
*Thou's*, thou art, thou wilt.  
*Thowless*, weak.  
*Thrang*, tied.  
*Thrane*, twenty-four sheaves of corn including two shocks.  
*Thrissle*, thistle.  
*Thysel*, thyself.  
*Till*, unto.  
*Till'l*, to it.  
*Tine*, to go astray.  
*Tinkler*, a tinker.  
*Tint*, lost.  
*Tippenny*, twopenny ale.  
*Tips*, rams.  
*Tirl*, shake.  
*Tither*, other.  
*Tittie*, sister.  
*Tods*, foxes.  
*Toop*, a ram.  
*Toun*, a hamlet.

*Towmont*, a twelvemonth.  
*Towsie*, shaggy.  
*Toy*, an old fashion of female head-dress.  
*Tulzie*, a quarrel.  
*Twa*, two.  
*Twal*, twelve.  
*Tyke*, a vagrant dog.  
  
*Unco*, very, strange.  
*Uncos*, strange things, news.  
*Unfauld*, to unfold.  
*Unlawfu'*, unlawful.  
*Upo'*, upon.  
*Usquebae*, usquebaugh, whiskey.  
  
*Vera*, very.  
  
*Wa'*, wall.  
*Wad*, would.  
*Wae*, woe.  
*Wae worth*, woe befall.  
*Wair't* spend it.  
*Wale*, to choose.  
*Walie*, ample, large, fine.  
*Wanchancie*, unlucky.  
*Wanrestfu'*, restless.  
*Wark*, work.  
*Warld*, world.  
*Warlock*, wizard.  
*Warily*, worldly.  
*Warsle*, to wrestle, to struggle.  
*Wat*, wot, know, wet.  
*Wauken*, to waken.  
*Waur*, worse.  
*Wee*, little.  
*Weed*, garment.  
*Weel*, well.  
*Weet*, wet.  
*We'se*, we shall or will.  
*Westlin'*, western.  
*Wha*, who.  
*Whalpet*, born.  
*Wham*, whom.  
*Whare*, where.  
*Whiddin*, running as a hare.  
*Whiles*, sometimes.  
*Whins*, furze bushes.  
*Whistle*, whistle.  
*Whitter*, a hearty draught of liquor.  
*Whunstone*, whinstone.  
*Wi'*, with.  
*Wi' 'm*, with him.  
*Wife*, dim. of wife.  
*Willie-waught*, a hearty draught.  
*Winna*, will not.  
*Winnock-bunker*, a seat in a window.  
*Wins*, winds.  
*Woefu'*, woeful.  
*Wonner*, a wonder, a term of contempt.  
*Woo'*, wool.  
*Wordy*, worthy.  
*Wrang*, wrong.  
*Wyliecoat*, a flannel vest.  
  
*Yestreen*, yesterday.  
*Yirth*, the earth.  
*Yokin'*, a bout, a set to.  
*Yont*, beyond.  
*Younkers*, youngsters.  
*Yoursel*, yourself.  
*Youthfu'*, youthful.  
*Yowe*, ewe.











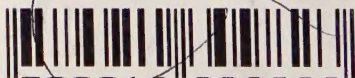
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